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ABSTRACT

This journal issue contains 18 solicited articles on two major topics: adult education and the elderly, and the literacy debate. The articles on adult education and the elderly include "A Ripe Old Age," republished from a newsletter of the British aid organization OXFAM; "Special Programme for Retirees: A Model Project in Cali, Colombia," by Gerardo Mondragon; "The Eternal Return," by Nqang O'Khan Kabwasa; "Aspects of Aging in India," by Ashis Bose; "Programmes for the Aged in Singapore," by Lim Hoy Pick; "Lifelong Learning: Educational Opportunities for the Elderly in South Korea," by Synghan Kim; "Burial Cult in Korea," by Mirok Li; "Death, an Indefinable Theme" a working paper of the German Adult Education Association; and "Approaches to Education for Retired People in the Federal Republic of Germany," by Monika Volker. Articles on the literacy debate include "Without Literacy, Development Limps on One Leg," by Harbans Bhola; "Now I Have Learned the Sudanese Word 'Musharaka' (='Participation')," by Bernd Pflug; "Are You Literate? A Collage," by Bernd Pflug; "WHY and HOW Literacy for Women: Some Thoughts in the Indian Context," by Kamla Bhasin; "Illiteracy, Women, and Development: Questions and Reflections," by Lalita Ramdas; "Adult Literacy by 1990," by Hans Raj Gugnani; "Adult Education and Rural Development," by Ranjit Singh; "Developing the Skills of Illiterate Health Workers," by A. R. El Tom, N. Mubarak, S. Wesley, M. H. Matthews, and D. Lauro; "Literacy Not Vital in Primary Care," by William R. Brieger; and "Action Research: A New Sociological Approach in Developing Countries," by Nelly Stromquist. Book reviews and suggested readings are included in the journal. (KC)

ADULT EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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ADULT EDUCATION AND THE ELDERLY
Case Studies from Latin America
Africa, Asia and Europe
Background Materials

THE LITERACY DEBATE
General Discussion
Literacy and Women
Literacy and Health-Programmes

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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March 1985 **Number 24**

GERMAN ADULT EDUCATION ASSOCATION (DVV)

ADULT EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

is a half-year journal for adult education in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

We herewith invite educators from all parts of the world to contribute to this journal. Articles should bear a considerable reference to practice. All fields of adult education and development can be treated, i.e. adult education should be regarded in its widest sense. We kindly ask you to send us short articles of not more than about 1 500 words; footnotes should be used as sparingly as possible.

»Adult Education and Development« is published by the German Adult Education Association, Department for International Co-operation (Head: Jakob Horn).

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To our readers

Nearly one year ago the editor of this journal sent out a circular on the topic of »The Elderly in Third World Countries and Adult Education«, asking our readers and competent authors on this matter to contribute an article or report on their own experiences for publication in this issue.

We expected to receive a good number of interesting examples on how adult education or non-formal educational activities try to deal specifically with the elderly either in using them actively in adult education programmes or as a group for which adult education programmes have been mounted.

The response from Third World Countries was rather meagre. It seems as if there has been a growing awareness of the increasing social changes also effecting the extended family system and thus the social security of older people. However, little seems to have been done so far by adult education agencies, governmental and non-governmental programmes, in taking care of this apparently new problem.

The articles that we have selected under the heading »The Elderly« give a good description of the changes in the social situation of the elderly and their learning experiences. The problem is fairly well discerned and pin-pointed but little learning exchange as to possible solutions and outcomes of learning experiments made so far is contained in the following articles.

We hope that our readers will, in spite of this descriptive character, be inspired to think about possible approaches, to try them out, to discuss and evaluate them and, if possible, report back on their experiences to »Adult Education and Development«.

We might then, in a later issue of the journal, be in an position to publish contributions on the topic of »The Elderly« which are of a more practical nature, more based on learning experiences.

We would therefore be happy to receive hints, articles, and opinions from our readers. Let us take the opportunity here to mention that one of the forthcoming issues of »Convergence« will also put some emphasis on this topic. For further information please write to Margaret Gayfer, Editor, Convergence, ICAE, 29 Prince Arthur Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5R 1B2.

»Convergence« also made another very appreciable step and kept the dialogue on the literacy issue alive, enriching it enormously through its last issue. More than nine contributions alone dealt with different aspects of literacy and some of the articles picked up the discussion that was to a certain extent sparked off by DVV's contribution in No. 21 »Cooperating or Campaigning for Literacy: Let's remove doubtful promises and cope with the practicable«.

With a time lag of nearly one year there has been quite an improvement in the quality of discussion and in our opinion a more indepth way of dealing with the problems of literacy. This can be seen from a number of those articles which we are publishing below under our second focal item »The Literacy Debate«.

For one of our next issues we are planning to deal with practical examples of participatory training and action research.

Examples and experiences, evaluations of past programmes, new ideas and approaches will all be welcome. Please write to the Editor, Adult Education and Development, Rheinallee 1, D-5300 Bonn 2, Federal Republic of Germany.

Wolfgang Leurer

»Bother« is the name of a monthly newsletter published by the British aid organisation »OXFAM« for its youth work programme as a »monthly comment on poverty and the struggle for development«.
We have taken the following text »A ripe old age« from issue 110, November 1982, of »Bother.« It serves as an introduction to one of the central themes of this edition of »Adult Education and Development«.
If you want to learn more about OXFAM and »Bother«, please write to the following address: Young OXFAM, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ.

A ripe old age

Lots of us living into old age

I at 24 until recently still had all four of my grandparents, and was even fortunate to have known one of my great grandmothers. But my experience is not an isolated one, and the reason is simply that far more people in this country are now living into their seventies, eighties and even nineties. United Nations figures show that the over sixties represent the fastest growing section of world population, and improved living conditions are likely to continue this trend. Rather daunting, when at the same time there are far fewer babies being born than before. The global birth rate is predicted to have halved between 1950 and 2025, while the average life expectancy will have risen from 47 to 70 years. So for the first time the old will outnumber the young.

Difficult years ahead

One of the implications of this is that there will be a reduced workforce struggling to maintain an overwhelmingly large number of dependent old people. Some communities in the Third World (the developing countries of Africa, Latin America, and Asia) find it hard to produce food and provide for everyone now. What will they do when they are faced with this problem? It makes the need even more urgent to improve the ability of developing countries to support themselves, and to distribute existing world resources more fairly and efficiently. The problem will be aggravated further in rural areas if young people of working age continue to leave their villages to settle in the towns. So efforts also need to be made to make rural life more attractive to encourage young people to stay.

Top heavy society

But what will a society be like with such a large proportion of old people? This prospect too may seem alarming, but should it? Shouldn't we be pleased that more and more people are living into healthy and long old age? Perhaps it seems alarming to people in the West because the assumption is made that all old people are naturally totally dependent and a burden.

Western myths about old age

Ageing is something that no-one can escape, it eventually happens to each and everyone of us. But is ageing something that needs to be »escaped«? Your answer will depend on how you view old people and how you would feel about swopping places with an old person. If you associate old age with Old People's Homes, loneliness, forgetfulness, senility, constant pain, uselessness and being a burden, the chances are that old age doesn't exactly seem attractive to you. If this is your portrait of

old age, then you, like many others have fallen victim to a series of myths and prejudices that surround old age.

Old bodies are sick bodies

This caricature of ageing only reflects a small percentage of old people. In fact 75% of old people in the developed world are free of disabling disease, do not suffer from senility and are quite capable of looking after themselves. Disability in old age is usually the result of an unhealthy life. Therefore improved standards of living in the developing countries could enable their people to look forward to a healthy old age too.

Too old to work

The retirement age in Britain (65 for men, 60 for women) was decided earlier this century. At the time the majority of elderly had lived unhealthy lives and suffered many hardships, and as a result weren't sufficiently strong in health to continue their working lives. So the retirement age made sense.

Today with improved health, nutrition, sanitation and living conditions, many elderly people are still fit and have all the skills they need to continue their working lives well over the retirement age. Many welcome retirement as a lifetime reward for hard work, but many don't and resent the now arbitrary retirement age forcing them into becoming unproductive and dependent members of society.

Different customs: old age a privileged state of life

Many elderly in Britain may well envy the position and place that old age and old people are given outside the western world.

Recently I was surprised by Mohammed, a visiting young Iranian student, when he told me his ambition in life was to be an old man just like his grandfather. His wish to attain old age became clear when he described the role his grandfather played in the family. Mohammed's grandfather, who is in his nineties, has a high status and is the focal point of the whole family, which not only includes his children and grandchildren, but also aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews. All members of the family come to him for advice and support. The responsibility Mohammed's grandfather carries naturally earns him great respect. In Iran status in the community is very much dependent on your age.

A form of retirement

Early retirement may not be as new as we think. It has been practised for many generations in some of the isolated villages in the Himalayas. In these communities a father will retire as soon as his eldest son works the land, and takes up weaving in its place. So working life as such never really stops.

Old is useful

In most traditional rural Indian communities there is no special retirement age, but a gradual drift to lighter work, such as caring for animals and collecting fodder. The elderly may also help out by looking after their grandchildren while the mothers work the land. Even these duties need a certain amount of strength and sadly it is usually only the strong in health that actually survive into old age.

Many grandparents live with a son, who will provide as best he can for them. Tragedy arrives when the elderly fall ill, and the family may not have enough income to pay for a doctor.

An old person with no children faces real problems and may have no proper means of support.

Ironic situation

Doesn't it seem ironic to you, that the over sixties in the developed world are much fitter and more capable than they've ever been before, but are suddenly stripped of responsibility and respect? Yet in the Third World many of the old, often less able and suffering from chronic ill-health and poor living conditions, continue to be both productive and respected members of society until the day they die.

Exported prejudices

Having seen that in some traditional communities, the old are given an accepted place, some of the values that have given rise to this are being slowly eroded away.

In Nairobi, Kenya, it is quite common now to see the old discarded and tossed aside, neither wanted or needed by their fellow citizens. Kenya is a young society, and the media and advertising hoardings on every street corner and available space, all transmit the same message »Young is best«. An image that is all too familiar in the West. These images, together with the disappearance of the three generation families as more people drift to the towns, are breaking up traditional society. Where once a special status was reserved for the elderly as the givers of wisdom, now, old age is portrayed as the ultimate failure.

Some rural communities so far have managed to escape these influences, but the results are very much in evidence in the slums of Nairobi.

Undugu Society of Kenya — an Oxfam supported project

Many slum dwellers find it hard to support themselves, particularly the elderly who usually live alone.

The Undugu Society try to provide aid by giving food and gifts to as many old people in the slums as they can. However, the Society is trying out just to provide charity for the old and isolated, but also to re-introduce the traditional values that support community life in Kenya.

One of Undugu's ideas has been to provide free lunches to school children in New Grogan and to invite old people along to eat with the children. When an old person is too weak to get to the school, children will take food to him, creating a new atmosphere of co-operation by re-establishing links between the old and young.

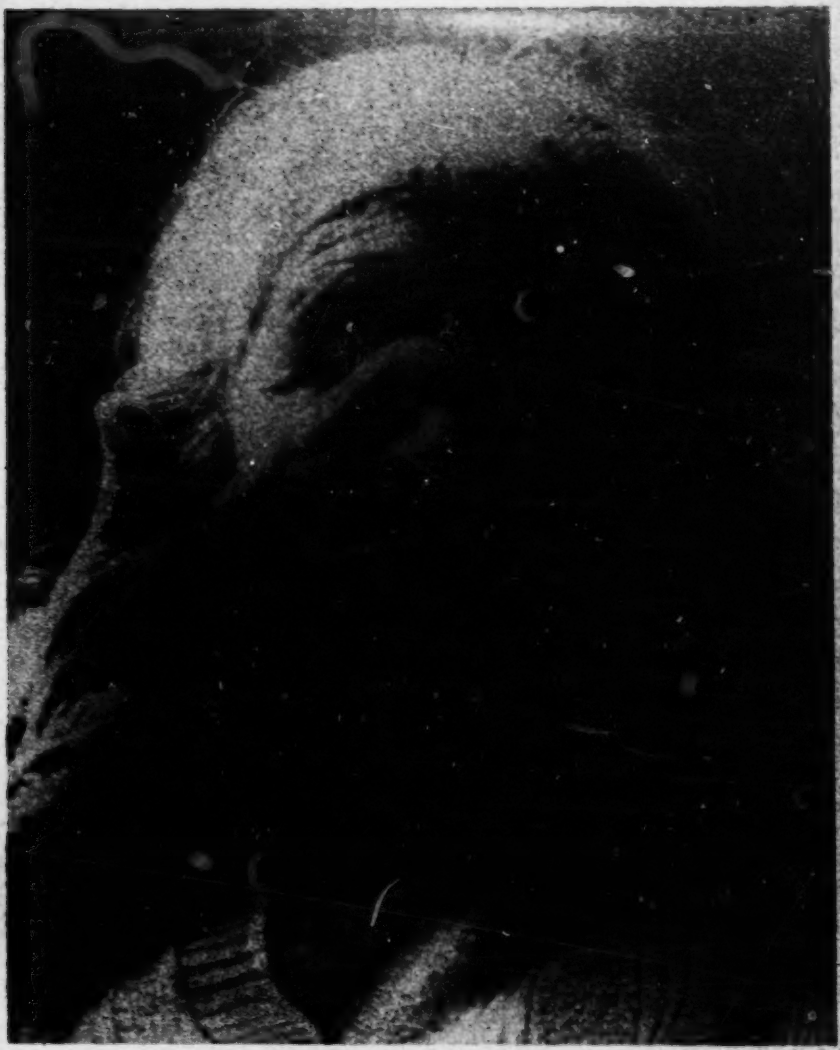
The committee also organises neighbours to help out by cooking, cleaning and performing other tasks for old people that they may find difficult. In return the old mind the children of working women. The result is that old people feel accepted and useful again and their neighbours have begun to form the basis for a caring community once more.

Poem

What do you see nurses, what do you see?
Are you thinking when you are looking at me —
A crabbit old woman, not very wise,
Uncertain of habit, with faraway eyes...
Who seems not to notice the things that you do
And forever is loosing a stocking or shoe...
Is that what you are thinking, is that what you see?
Then open your eyes, nurse, you are looking at me...

I will tell you who I am as I sit here so still...
I'm a small child of ten with a father and mother,
Brothers and sisters who love one another...
A young girl of sixteen with wings on her feet,
Dreaming that soon how a lover she'll meet;
A bride soon at twenty — my heart gives a leap,
Remembering the vows that I promised to keep;
At twenty-five now I have young of my own,
Who need me to build a secure, happy home;
At forty, my young sons now grown and will be gone...
At fifty once more babies play round my knee...

Dark days are upon me, my husband is dead,
I look at the future, I shudder with dread,
I'm an old woman now and nature is cruel —
'Tis her jest to make old age look like a fool...
But inside this old carcass a young girl still dwells
And now and again my battered heart swells...
So open your eyes, nurse open and see
Not a crabbit old woman,
Look closer
See
ME!



In 1982, the Alfonso López P. Public Centre for Adult Education, together with the Social Security Institute and the German Adult Education Association, initiated the development of a model programme for retirees.
In the following article, Mr. Gerardo Mondragón, Department Head of the above mentioned Centre and coordinator for the project, describes in summary the development of the model. Detailed supplementary information may be requested from the coordinating office of the German Adult Education Association, P.O. Box 10.009, Cali/Colombia.

Gerardo Mondragón

Special programme for retirees A model project in Cali, Colombia

A. General aspects

The age structure of the Colombian population is expected to change during the coming years, as a result of the decrease in birth and mortality rates. While in 1973 people older than 60 made up for 7.47% of the Colombian population, in 1983 this figure rose to 5.07% and it is expected to rise to 5.84% in 1993; in the year 2003, Colombia will have 2 742 300 senior citizens, accounting for 6.79% of the estimated population of the country.

The aging rate will increase from 6.1% in 1973 to 8.1% in 1983; to 12% for 1993, and to 14.3% for the year 2003.

During 1983, the population over 50 years old in the Province of Valle del Cauca constituted 11.26% of the total; it is expected that by 1983 it will be in the range of 14.39%, and the projections for the year 2003 indicate that 19.1% of the »vallecaucana« population will be over 50 years of age.

The aforementioned figures point out a substantial increase in the number of senior citizens projected for the beginning of the XXI Century, and will have doubled the estimates made for 1983. These people have reached retirement age and have ceased to be a part of society's productive process, becoming a burden at a time when their productive capacity has reached a peak due to their expertise and knowledge acquired throughout their long years of work.

Transferring these experiences to younger generations would contribute to a better social performance on investment.

In its current stage of development, Colombia is not in a position to support such a high percentage of retirees alienated from productive activities. A 72.3% dependency rate is an obstacle for any society engaged in social and economic development.[1]

On the other hand, society as a socio-economic system, expresses a negative attitude towards old age as evidenced in productive, educational and recreational activities, shunning academic research on the reality of aging. Rejection of aging and old age is evident in actions and attitudes such as reduction of the scope of action, autonomy and independence of the aging person. The aging person reflects these social expressions by showing apathy, anguish, loneliness, animic depression, etc., triggered by a loss of social interest, feelings of inadequacy and insecurity. Because of these factors, the aging person's health, physical as well as emotional, continues to worsen as a result of the process of alienation which society and the family group impose upon the aging person.

The solution to the problems of senior citizens has currently acquired new dimensions. It has to be accepted in a responsible way by society and the state, in all of the development programmes nationwide. It is in this sense that the training of senior citizens is becoming a commitment and a challenge for the Colombian society, especially for those institutions responsible for social security and adult education.

It should be noted that Professor Rico Velasco sets the economically productive age limit at 64 years; in Colombia, the retirement age is 55 years for women and 60 years for men. Furthermore, he considers that these retirees are still at a potentially productive age.

The Alfonso López P. Public Centre for Adult Education (CEPAL), and the Valle del Cauca regional Social Security Institute (ISS), have jointly initiated a programme that will allow for valid solutions to be found for the senior citizen's problems in Colombia, specifically in Valle del Cauca.

The programme has been assembled in consultation with the senior citizens themselves in recognition of their individual expectations, the social needs of the senior population, as well as the specific situation of the aged in the labour sector and productive activities. The approach is that of developing a social policy in harmony with national reality.

Thus, since 1982, programmes for the training of retirees — whether due to age or disabilities — have been developed in CEPAL and requested by I.S.S. Valle. Initially, it was intended for retirees to meet with younger adults attending regular training courses at the Alfonso López P. Public Centre for Adult Education. The evaluation of this experience indicated the need to form homeogeneous groups of senior citizens in order to develop the training course in those specialised areas analysed by the multi-disciplinary group of experts in education, health and social work, as well as occupational therapy. This consideration

incorporates a careful individual evaluation of the aspirant to join the programme in order to guide the retired or disabled citizen towards the most promising training so as to obtain the best results in accordance with the senior citizen's expectations, the satisfaction of his social needs, and the objectives of the programme. It should be noted that the senior citizen's receptivity to this is significantly high.

In observing the learning process of the senior citizen, especially if the individual is an elderly person, the relative slowness in the assimilation of knowledge is evident, as compared to the young adult, thus the interference that learning under similar conditions occurs at different rhythms for the elderly and for the young adult, although the quality of learning itself is not impaired. Relevant factors which may influence slower learning rates and skill acquisition by the elderly in our specific programme are the natural decline in psychomotor coordination as well as the low scholarity levels of the participants, mainly former blue-collar workers, and the lengthy period of time elapsed since they took part in systematic academic learning.

The former considerations, both pedagogic and social, point to the need for developing a specific curriculum for the training of people 60 years and older. It should reflect and harmonise with the individual expectations of the senior citizens, the social needs and the reality of the retiree in the labour sector in a society where opportunities for the senior population in need of training — that is, permanent and continued training envisioned as a life process — are scarce and practically nil for the elderly and the retiree in general, due to prejudice that confuses learning in the first stages of life with certain physical and psychological human conditions.

In the guidance, administration and execution of the study programme resulting from each training area, a prerequisite was perceived which is the specialised training of instructors in new

techniques and concepts, vital in their professional work as teachers working with the elderly.

In 1984 a new programme was initiated, enriched by previous experiences and strengthened by the parallel actions of the training of instructors. In the new curriculum, such fundamental components as recreation and the use of leisure time were included, as well as guidance in the creation of organisational production models channeled through private actions, together with its technical element in each speciality.

At the present time, 320 retirees are being trained at the Alfonso López Pumarejo Public Centre for Adult Education, in the following areas: pastrymaking and confectionery; bakery; hairstyling; flower arrangements; sewing; domestic electricity; drama; private enterprise and ceramics. The latter has a therapeutic emphasis, but aims at future inclusion in the work sector.

As can be seen, self-employment training for the retiree is focused on productive activities, allowing for the strengthening of the socio-economic development of the nation through creative and qualified work.

B. Social aspects

1. This programme constitutes a pioneer experience, both in social security and in education. It should be noted that for the first time social security has joined the adult learning process as an alternative offering new opportunities to the sector of the community which is retired because of old age or disability. This action in benefit of the senior population responds to the political-institutional junction aiming at the well-being of the individual as well as social progress. Nonetheless, the implementation of the programme would have been impossible if the institutions did not have a clear view and a firm intention to assist the retiree

sector, traditionally excluded from the mainstream of social development.

2. The best type of medicine, and the most cost-effective socially, is preventive medicine. When the individual — in this case the retiree — discovers new motivations and interests and new options opening before him, his attitude towards life is transformed, as is his social and personal outlook. Thus, the retiree becomes less and less dependent emotionally and socially, and possibly in the medical aspect also, playing a role in society with augmented efficiency and thus resulting in improved social productivity.

3. The special programme for retirees allows for the social restitution of a large number of potentially productive individuals for whom the right to actively participate in the social processes, especially in the productive process, had been denied.

4. This programme may serve as a model for other institutions, as for the national I.S.S. itself, to be applied and adapted to other regions of the country. As such, the Departamento del Valle consolidates its leadership in the educational and social development in the country, contributing thus to the attainment of socio-economic development goals, leading to greater social justice and the consolidation of our nationality.

5. The programme allows for the rescuing of values almost lost, which remain a part of the older generation. These values, which have always been verbally transmitted from generation to generation, have not been systematically compiled as yet.

C. Pedagogical aspects

1. The experience conducted with a group of retirees has allowed for the analysis and comprehension of the learning processes of the elderly and disabled retirees. This constitutes a funda-

mental contribution to the educational development of the country, as it fills a void in the Colombian pedagogic theory. The concept of learning as a continuous vital and permanent life process has thus been introduced.

2. The retiree, due to age or disability, has proven that he has the capacity to learn, to assimilate new knowledge and to contribute with his experience towards the improvement of the learning process.

It should be noted that when the elderly persons are adequately stimulated, when sensorial stimulus is incorporated and methodologically reinforced, when knowledge is adequately imparted in accordance with the slower rhythm of learning, and when these people are given the opportunity of rescuing their self-esteem and feel valuable within the social context, they achieve personal fulfillment.

3. It is not considered convenient to mix groups of young adults and elderly retirees, since the learning process occurs at different rhythms.

This fact may respond to diverse psychomotor development conditions, to the time period elapsed since the person has been engaged in systematic learning, to the decline in scholarity levels of the majority of the programme's retirees, to the type of work previously performed by the participants during their working life, where a high percentage were blue-collar workers.

4. No incompatability was detected between the learning process and that of socialisation, among people retired due to age and those retired because of disabilities. In fact, it is considered advisable for these groups to intermingle in the training programmes, since solidarity and understanding is reinforced in both groups, and the wish for self-improvement becomes stronger. The retiree identifies himself with the rest of his peers,

and with his own problems, upon realising his and other retirees' life ordeals.

5. The special programme for retirees requires the presence of instructors especially trained for this purpose. Thus it becomes necessary to train teachers for the programme by the Alfonso López Pumarejo Centre and by any institution willing to engage in responsible educational activities with groups of senior citizens and/or disabled persons, whether retired or not.

6. The design of a specific curriculum with study plans prepared specifically for the special programme for retirees is therefore essential.

7. It is recommended that the courses undertaken by retired persons should have a strong element of practical work, in areas where, besides learning, the opportunity to establish social relationships with groups or persons whose interests, expectations, and topics discussed will be compatible. This allows for the conformation of social groups with a measure of stability, where the retired persons carry out social action and satisfy their need for socialising.

1 In 1983, the dependency rate was estimated at 72.3%. A reduction of this rate is projected due to the percentage reduction of the young population and to the proportional increase of people in the 15 - 64 age bracket, considered to be in an economically productive age.

Rate of aging: $\frac{(15 \text{ years and below} + 65 \text{ years and over}) \times 100}{15 - 64 \text{ years}}$

Adult education and the elderly — this does not only mean the elderly in the role of the learner but also the elderly in the role of the teacher; in the role of one who can pass on wisdom and experience.
In the African philosophy of life this is of great significance. As a result the elderly in Africa have an important function in adult education.
Nisang O'Khan Kabwasa comes from Zaire and has been working for the UNESCO Division for Illiteracy, Adult Education and Regional Development since 1977.
The contribution of Kabwasa is a reprint from »UNESCO-Courier«, October 1982.

Nsang O'Khan Kabwasa

The eternal return

In the African Society from which I come — the Ambuun, the people indigenous to the Kwilu region in Zaire — people are not regarded as being elderly at a specific age, but are recognized as such when their hair goes white or when they become grandparents, and then they are addressed with deference and honorary titles are attached to their names. They are generally called **tata** (father), **mbuta** (elder) or even **nkuluntu** (literally: »old head«). In this society of oral traditions, as in most African societies, old people are the foundation of village life. It is said, moreover, that a village without old people is like a hut eaten away by termites.

The respect in which they are held stems not only from not only from their having achieved long life — a rare phenomenon in Africa — but also from the African animistic view of the universe in which life is seen as a never-ending current flowing through succeeeding generations of mankind. Before his birth, the African is already part of this process; he forms part of a group from which he is indissociable, he cannot be separated either from those who have preceeded him or from those who will follow him, and traditional values will protect him against abandonment and solitude.

In this African view of the world, which is linked to the concept of vital force, old age constitutes a stage in human life towards which everyone aspires since the belief in an afterlife, the continuity of life and in ancestor worship places old people in a special position, since they are the link between the living and the dead.

This unending life is seen as a circular movement going from birth to death and from death to birth.

Just as the child is destined to become an adult, the adult an old man, and the old man an ancestor, the ancestor as vital force will be reborn to complete the circle of life in the universe. In the Ambuun conception of the universe, after death begins the invisible life of the spirits, that of the ancestors. This invisible world contains the supreme vital force which the ancestors communicate to old people.

To each of the three ages of man there corresponds a particular function. Thus childhood is a period of learning, a very physical period of life, during which spiritual development is in gestation. Maturity is a productive period of life when a man reaches physical and spiritual equilibrium. Old age is the age of wisdom and of teaching. There is thus no question of retirement, for »even if the bodies of old people are frail, their spirit does not go into re-

tirement«. On the contrary, it is a time when the life of the spirit becomes intensified.

Old people continue to fulfil important functions in society, functions which rely on their knowledge of traditions in various fields: legal, religious, medico-magical, educational or economic. It is at the time of initiation that, as possessors of traditional knowledge, they ritually transmit their practical experience orally to the new generation. That is why, as the African sage Hampâté Bâ of Mali has so aptly expressed it, it is a common saying in Africa that »Each time an old man dies, a whole library goes up in flames.«

Moreover, old people are not only respected, they are also feared; though if it should happen that an elderly person is not on very good terms with the other members of the family, the magical force which he possesses may sometimes work against him and he runs the risk of being regarded as a **Ndoki** (a sorcerer, a caster of evil spells). He may then be sent away and banished from the village, but generally efforts are made to appease him with presents so that he will withdraw his evil spells and bless the activities of the young people.

With advancing age and the weakening of physical powers, the elderly become dependent, and it is the youngest member of the family who is responsible for looking after them. It is for this reason that every man aims to have a large family as an insurance for his old age. Naturally, such systems only work effectively when the entire family lives in the same village and follows a traditional way of life.

However, nowadays there is a riks of old people being socially excluded or isolated when the young go off to the towns or to foreign countries. With the decline in traditional values, the introduction of modern Western schools and the spread of the individualistic values of urban life, the spectre of old people's

homes has begun to appear in some African cities. The question is what can be done about it.

The affirmation of cultural identity and the restoration to their true value of the African traditions mentioned above could serve as a guide to young people in Africa in the construction of a modern Africa which would not be based solely on imported values unsuited to African socio-economic conditions. This would reject the individualistic conception of making people of a certain age go into retirement on the fringe of society because they are no longer physically productive, ignoring the spiritual contribution which old people can make to society.

The spirit of the old does not go into retirement, and it would be a good idea, in order to maintain the contacts between the young and the old, to encourage the young to take every opportunity to learn from the old, who are the possessors of wisdom and a knowledge of life, while at the same time recognizing the importance of Western science and technology.

This return to the wisdom of our elders might take the form of encouraging visits by old people to schools. They would thus be called on to contribute to education by giving an account of their own experiences and imparting the history and traditional knowledge which they alone can transmit.
They could likewise contribute to the establishment of »data banks« of traditional knowledge. An attempt should be made to develop the possibility of integrating the elderly through their active participation in the education of the young, for they have their role to play in contemporary African society and this is the only way of avoiding their isolation from the other generations. The elderly still have something to teach us, and the respect paid to them in traditional societies should not be regarded as outmoded. The system which was founded on the hierarchy of age and ancestor worship should be preserved and readapted to the circumstances of contemporary Africa, in which African and Western values exist side by side.

The following essay has been taken from a publication of the Indian Social Institute »Ageing in South Asia« in which individual contributions, arising from the Regional Conference of Active Ageing, have been introduced. Ashish Bose is Professor at the Population Research Centre, Institute of Economic Growth. His article takes a look at the various aspects of ageing in India. It attempts to show that the situation of the elderly in India is not in every respect worse than that of the elderly in industrialised countries, but definitely different. To be able to understand this »otherness:, the socio-economic and cultural conditions have to be taken into consideration. The full version of this article can be obtained from: Indian Social Institute, Monograph Series, Lodi Road, New Delhi 110 003.

Ashish Bose

Aspects of aging in India

Role of the elderly

In a country like India where about 59 per cent of the total population is below 25 years and only a little over 3 per cent of the population is over 65 years, the problems of children and youth and consequently, problems of nutrition, health, education and employment, dominate the scene. And yet this statistical picture should not mislead one to believe that the aged in India play only a marginal role. On the contrary, in an average Indian household, it is usually the oldest male member of the family who is the head of the household and his decisions are rarely questioned. He owns the property, he decides where and how to

educate his children; he gets his children married when they are grown up; in fact, he brings under his umbrella his entire family, regardless of the age of the individual members and considers it his bounden duty to direct, advise and guide them till the moment of his death.

The spread of education, industrialisation, urbanisation and so-called modernisation, has no doubt brought about several cracks in this monolithic domination of the oldest member of the household but still it will be a fairly safe observation that the Indian family and society continue to be dominated by the elderly. At the national level also, the political scene has long been dominated by the elderly and the role of gerontocracy in Indian politics is a subject of frequent criticism. In short, the influence of the elderly is far out of proportion to their numbers, in almost every walk of life in India — social, economic and political. But such a statement should not mislead one to conclude that the elderly in India are not subject to hardships and misery, physical as well as psychological, as in other parts of the world, both developed and developing.

Concept of family cycle

Among the significant advances in Demography in recent years, we must mention the emergence of the concept of family cycle and Family Demography. The basic idea underlying this concept is that families are affected by events such as marriage, birth of children, launching of children into their marriages, the 'post-children' stage and ultimate dissolution of the family by the death of one of the spouses. These events in turn interact with social and economic factors like housing, consumption and saving patterns, economic activity and social welfare. In a study of the family life cycle of Japanese women in 1940 and 1972, a Japanese demographer compared the family life cycle and demonstrated the profound impact of the improvement in mortality and

the increase in expectation of life of Japanese women, and also of the adoption of the small family norm in the post-War years.

The dramatic changes in the life-cycle in Japan are mainly the result of the spectacular fall in Japanese fertility in the post-War II period. In India, as the first results of the 1981 Census have indicated, there is no evidence of a significant decline in fertility. The fall in mortality in recent decades, however, has been considerable though not spectacular. This has meant a gradual increase in the expectation of life at birth. A fall in mortality, however, has very little impact on the age structure. So the proportion of the elderly has remained more or less the same, unlike the Japanese situation where there has been a significant increase in the population 65 years and over. The 'empty nest' couples (in the absence of children) prevail in the Indian situation only among small elite groups of people in the big cities. A large family sustained by high fertility and the extended family pattern still dominates the scene in India. The Japanese situation, on the other hand, is similar to the situation in Northern Europe and America.

Family protection

For a detailed picture of the shelter offered to elderly people, one must turn to surveys directed specifically towards elderly people. The social protection offered to the aged by the family network is evident from the following table taken from the survey of persons of 60 and over in Madras City.

Table 1

Living arrangement of 60+ persons (per cent)

	Men	*Women*	*Total*
Alone	2	3	3
Only with spouse	10	1	5
With married son	39	39	39
With married daughter	10	23	17
With married son and daughter	4	5	4
With unmarried child	25	7	15
With siblings	5	6	5
With grandchildren	1	4	3
With other relatives	5	10	8
With non-relatives	1	2	1
	100	100	100

In a survey of problems of retired people in Greater Bombay, it was shown that the majority of respondents are protected by their families:

»Their health problems and their financial problems are taken care of by their family members. They are surrounded by their family members and are also respected by them. Respect for old age is still a 'value' for persons in our culture. Therefore, our respondents do not feel isolated or rejected by the family. Our retired persons are quite better off as compared to their counterparts in the Western countries. We believed that the joint family system is fast breaking down in our cities. Our study does not support such a notion. A large majority of our respondents are staying with their children and/or near relatives. And family is their best insurance in old age. We are not trying to paint a rosy picture of our retired people. They have their share of problems but most of these are taken care of by the family and hence our respondents do not become problematic for the society.

They are not so vulnerable as their counterparts in Western countries.«

It may be noted in this connection that the Bombay survey covered only pensioners. Obviously, such people are quite well-off even after retirement compared to the aged who did not have any pension at all. When there is a pension, the family also benefits from the pensioner and it is not, therefore, a one-way process of helping out an old member of the family.

What happens when there is no pension and the children and other relatives are too poor to take care of the old? It is worth noting that in India, old age pension is, by and large, confined to a small group of government employees while the rural masses have no social assistance or social insurance programmes except some old age pension schemes, launched by some State governments in recent years, which are really meant for destitutes. One should therefore not generalise from studies of pensioners in cities like Bombay.

Role of sons in pension schemes

In this context, it may be mentioned that Uttar Pradesh was the first State government to introduce an Old Age Pension Scheme in 1957. Subsequently, similar schemes were introduced in a number of other States. At the suggestion of the Department of Social Welfare, Government of India, evaluation studies were undertaken by academic scholars to critically assess the working of these schemes.

Basically, these schemes are meant for the **destitutes.** For example, in Uttar Pradesh, a destitute is defined as a person who does not have any source of income (or income of less than Rs 30 per month) and who **does not have any son or grandson whose age is 20 years or more.** In Kerala also, the eligibility conditions are similar. The evaluation study of Kerala points out

that »the worst part of the pension scheme is that it attaches so much importance to the son and son's son than the daughter. Actually, we found that more persons stayed with the daughters than sons and the number of those looked after by son's sons was very small. As per the rule, even those old persons living with affluent daughters are eligible for pension.« It may be mentioned here that due to the prevalence of the matriarchal system in Kerala, staying with a married daughter is quite common, unlike in Uttar Pradesh.

Active aging

Aged persons according to a Delhi Survey can be put into various categories of economic activity in keeping with their health condition.

Table 2

Activities of the aged in Delhi

Activeness-Incapacity rating	*Per cent of aged*
Fully active and engaged in full-time gainful work	22.2
Fully active, engaged in part-time gainful work	3.2
Active but not engaged in gainful work	50.2
Partly invalid but engaged in some occupation	1.1
Partly invalid but not following any occupation	18.5
Totally invalid	4.8
	100.0

The fact that 50 per cent of the aged are active but not in gainful work shows the immense scope for working out programmes for **active retirement** and **active aging.** It must be noted, however, that this large percentage of the active aged in Delhi is because

of the higher levels of nutrition, education, health, housing and income in Delhi. We have already discussed the plight of the aged in the rural areas, especially the position of landless workers who have nothing to fall back upon after 'retirement'. The poor nutrition and low income levels to which they are subjected right from the beginning of their life lead to **premature aging.** In a country like India, **the focus should be on premature aging rather than active aging.** The tragedy of the situation is further heightened by the fact that the aged in the agricultural sector and in the unorganised industrial sector in the cities have to continue to work in the absence of any economic security in old age.

It may be noted in this connection that the retirement age for most government officials in India was only 55 years till recently. The retirement age has now been increased to 58 years in spite of the increase in the expectation of life in recent decades. The tragedy of the situation is that while there is a good case for extending the age of retirement this is not done because of the high incidence of unemployment in the younger age group, especially among the educated young. There is a constant clamour for **not** increasing the retirement age, for **not** giving any extension to even fit and competent government employees. This is another dimension of the problem of the aged in India and highlights the need for looking at the development of the **economy as a whole** and the problem of **all** age groups and not merely confining the discussion to the problems of 60+ or 65+ only.

But the real issue is: Is there a retirement age in agriculture and in rural areas? The answer, of course, is a tragic 'No.'

Neglect of the agricultural sector

In a country like India where over 70 per cent of the working force is engaged in agriculture, the problems of the aging population must be viewed basically in the context of agricultural de-

velopment. In the field of social security, the agricultural sector has not kept pace with other economic sectors, especially in the developing countries.

In the industrialised countries, no one really questions the general need for such protection any longer, but it is sometimes regarded as less vital in other countries. ... There is certainly a temptation to reserve the first social protection benefits for industrial workers in order to promote adaptation to the industrial and urban world. This has, in fact, been the most common approach and the example of Africa is characteristic. But the risk is thereby increased by widening the gap in working and living conditions between town and country, of encouraging the haphazard drift towards the towns, of accelerating the decline of the traditional social structures before a modern system has been established, and of causing urban sprawl and its concomitant of shanty towns full of out-of-work men and women. Of course, this is not just a matter of social security policy; it is the relative place of industrial and agricultural development within the overall system of development that is at issue here. Nevertheless, by consolidating the situation of industrial wage-earners, who are already a privileged minority by virtue of the level and regularity of their income, social security may further increase tension between the various groups to the detriment of that balanced political and social development which is so vital for economic progress. This is a further reason why social protection to meet needs of rural societies should be rapidly initiated.

There is no doubt that in predominantly rural and agricultural societies like India, social assistance and social security programmes must not leave out the major chunk of the poor — the landless agricultural workers, the marginal farmers, workers in the unorganised and household industries and workers in the poverty-based service sector. Inasmuch as a part of rural poverty is extended to urban areas through rural to urban migration, the problems of the poor in the urban sector should not be ignored.

It may be noted that out of a total working force of roughly 220 million (1981 Census), only a few million workers are protected by pension, provident fund, gratuity and insurance schemes. All permanent employees of the Central and State governments, defence personnel, employees of public sector undertakings, railways and post and telegraph workers, industrial workers, plantation workers, mining workers and only a fraction of workers in the private sector and statutory organisations enjoy some form of old age benefits.

Perception of the aged of their problems

Health problems and financial difficulties overshadow the problems of the aged as will be evident from the following table based on a survey of pensioners in Kerala State:

Table 3

Worst things about being over 65 years (Kerala)

Poor health and concern over health	46.1
Financial difficulty	38.5
Ignored by kin / loneliness / boredom	7.3
Fear of death	5.8
Helplessness	2.3

Interestingly enough, when the aged respondents were asked about the best things about being over 65 years, the most common answer was that they perceived 'being nearer to the end of life' as a good thing.

Table 4

Best things about being 65+ (Kerala), per cent

Being nearer to the end of life	50.5
Looked after well by kinsmen / surrounded by family members / peace of mind	22.5
More leisure / no work	13.7
Not having to earn one's living	9.1
Other responses	4.2

In spite of the great supportive role of the family in taking care of the aged in India, it is becoming increasingly clear that **problems of health and financial security cannot be left to the family alone.** The Government and voluntary agencies must lend a helping hand in a big way. This is not a case for switching over from the present system of social protection afforded by the family to a system of institutional arrangements for taking care of the aged — the failures of such an arrangement in the developed countries are well-known. **The emotional support of the family must not be eroded.**

Religion has a profound role in the daily lives of the elderly in India. The attitudes of contentment, peace and tranquility are values which are deep-rooted in Indian society, and the roots are indeed deep when we consider the aged.

Some Closing Remarks

In a study of mental health of the aged based on medical statistics of France, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, U.K. and U.S.A., it was found that:

»*The United States has much to learn about the care and treatment of its mentally frail aged, but it has much to teach also.*

The current picture is sometimes depressing, but progress is being made and should continue at an accelerating pace. Certainly, the research efforts under way should point to bright future development, but with a steadily mounting population of aged people, there is no time for complacency.«

This was written in 1960. There is no reason to believe that things have improved vastly for the aged in the developed countries of the world, for that matter, anywhere in the world. We would like to conclude that **India has much to learn about the care and treatment of the aged, but it has much to teach also.**

India has to learn so much from the experience of developed countries in the field of social assistance and social security programmes, the special schemes for the aged in regard to housing, health, education and recreation, the institutional arrangements for the aged, the automatic procedures for safeguarding the real income of the pensioners against the onslaught of inflation and a host of related issues. India must fight the battle for the old at all age groups, especially in the early years of life when malnutrition and undernutrition, apart from taking a heavy toll in infancy and childhood, also lead to **premature aging** of the population in a biological sense. People can expect to live long only when they are healthy in the early years of life. India has also to fight for the emancipation of women who remain at a disadvantage right from birth to death. The plight of widows is particularly deplorable. Finally, it is not enough to give pension to the organised sector of the labour force and leave out the much larger agricultural sector from social protection through State assistance. The landless workers in agriculture and the urban workers in the unorganised sector constitute the bulk of the poor in India. Social assistance and social security programmes are almost non-existent for these people.

The developed countries in the West can likewise learn several things from India — the reverence for age, the premium put on

A. 37

wisdom and experience as opposed to knowledge and information, the unshakable foundations of the institution of family, the social protection offered by the extended family, the pride of parenthood and the great expectations on the part of parents from their children and grandchildren, the claim of love and affection which transcends the immediate blood relations and engulfs the entire family network, the respect for the institution of marriage and the social disapproval of divorce, and above all, the philosophy of contentment in old age and the contempt for farcical attempts on the part of the old to look young and act young, the realisation that the mindless pursuit of consumerism will not bring happiness and the aged must find **inner strength** to sustain them in old age, the need for **looking beyond** in the quest for peace and finally, the abiding faith in God, religion, prayer and meditation which alone can enrich the concluding years of life.

The developed countries in the West cannot go back to the traditional extended family system nor can the developing countries in Asia opt for a system of **total** institutional care for the aged. **There must be a half-way house where the efficiency of modern institutions can merge with the warmth of the family ties of the olden days.** Perhaps the aged should look to voluntary and religious institutions to build this halfway house for them and bring in harmony with the State and the family.

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Lim Hoy Pick

Programmes for the aged in Singapore

Problems of the aged

Like many other countries in the world, Singapore is facing the problem of an ageing society. In 1947, the total population of Singapore was only 938 000. The age groups of the population constituted 36% of 1 - 14 years, 62% of 15 - 64 years and 2% of 65 years and above respectively. By 1980, the population had increased to 2 414 000 and the proportions of the age groups had changed to 27%, 68% and 5%. Because of a rapidly falling birth rate, and longer life expectancy, the proportion of aged persons will quadruple from 5% to 19% in the next 50 years. On the other hand, the percentage of the economically active age group (15 - 64 years) will be significantly reduced. The main economic and educational implications of these demographic trends are obvious. Firstly, there will be fewer economically active people to support more economically inactive ones and secondly, many senior citizens who wish to continue working after their custom-

ary retirement at 55 will have to be retrained for alternative employment and those who do not wish to work after retirement will have to be reoriented on the use of leisure.

In Singapore, life expectancy was about 50 in 1947. Now it is about 70 for males and 73 for females. It may be further improved with better food and medical care. The ageing of the population is becoming a serious matter. In the past most people lived in large extended families. Three or even four generations used to live under one roof. Now because of urbanization, these extended households have been split into nuclear families, each staying in their own highrise flats, often in different housing estates. Many older people are facing the problem of isolation when their children grow up, get married and move into other housing estates with their own families.

Today as most parents are both working outside their homes, the education of their children is left entirely to the schools. During the last 2 decades the educational system has placed much emphasis on the teaching of mathematics and science, but little attention has been paid to moral education, especially the inculcation of traditional family oriented social values, moral concepts of filial piety and respect for the elderly. Consequently, a new better educated younger generation has grown up with western ideas and behaviour patterns. Most of them have forsaken the Asian traditions and cultural concepts and adopted a more materialistic and individualistic way of life. They tend to believe that their duties are to look after themselves, their spouses and children, but not their aged parents. They assume that the government should take care of their aged parents when they are too old or weak to look after themselves.

At present all employees, with the exception of civil servants, contribute up to 25% of their salaries to the Central Provident Fund (CPF) every month. Their employers contribute the same amount to this fund for them. That means their monthly savings amount to 50% of their monthly salaries. They can withdraw this

fund only at the age of 55 years when they retire. The problem is that those who retire and withdraw CPF savings at 55 can expect to live for another 2 decades or longer and that their savings may not be sufficient to cover this period, especially if inflation takes place. The problem will be aggravated by the fact that many retirees may not know how to invest or protect their savings after withdrawal from CPF.

Programmes for the aged

In Singapore, there are several active organisations for the aged. They are the Singapore Action Group of Elders, Senior Citizens'Clubs in community centres, People's Association Retirees' Club, Pensioners' Association and the Retired Teachers' Association. The total membership of these organisations is about 12 000, representing about 7% of the aged population who are 60 years and above. Of these organisations, the Singapore Action Group of Elders (SAGE) has been the most active one. It organises a variety of cultural and recreational activities for its members, viz., Chinese martial art, table tennis, basketball, folk dancing, ballroom dancing, choir, harmonica group, Cantonese and Peking opera, and TV and video programmes. It also provides free medical check-ups for its members. Since 1978, it has been publishing a quarterly journal entitled 'Singapore Elders'. Every year, board members of SAGE are actively involved in the planning and organisation of activities for the Senior Citizens' Week which is an annual event to promote greater social awareness of the need to remember and respect the elders in the community. The objectives of holding Senior Citizens' Week are:

(1) To show appreciation to all elders for their past contributions towards the building up of the nation

(2) To remind the younger generation of the struggle and sacrifice the elders had made in bringing them up

42 : 1

(3) To provide an opportunity for all Singaporeans to think not only of their parents and grandparents but also of all other senior citizens

(4) To inculcate in students love and respect for their parents, grandparents and all other elders right from their childhood

(5) To contribute towards making Singapore a warm and caring society.

All activities during the week are jointly organised and supported by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Council of Social Service, People's Association, SAGE and other voluntary organisations. One of the activities during the 1984 Senior Citizens' Week was a colloquy on 'Family Relationships' with the Elderly'. It discussed issues such as the changing trends, structure and pattern of family relationships, factors affecting family relationships with the elderly and the reciprocal relationship between the adult-children and their parents.

Three-tier Camp Workshop

In September 1983 a 3-day Camp Workshop on 'Three-Tier Family Living' was jointly organised by the Singapore Women's Association, SAGE and the Department of Extramural Studies, National University of Singapore. The objectives of the Camp Workshop were:

(1) to promote interaction among participants of different age groups

(2) to improve their skills in interpersonal relationships

(3) to promote their mutual understanding, especially their feelings and ideas about three-tier family living, and,

(4) to encourage three-tier family living.

There were 30 participants of whom 3 were in 14 - 20 age group, 19 in 21 - 54 and 8 in 55 and above, the youngest being 16 years old, a student, and the oldest 67, a great grandmother. There were 17 males and 13 females.

The Camp Workshop programme included the following activities:

(1) Getting to know one another. The participants got to know each other through self and paired introduction. After that they had a social evening of singing and dancing.

(2) Group discussion. Participants were formed into 5 small groups of 6 persons each. They brainstormed and discussed such topics as the pros and cons of 3-tier family living and how to overcome conflicts in the family.

(3) 3-tier idea through pictures. Each group was asked to present 3-tier ideas through drawings and cartoons. Some very interesting pictures were created, including a family tree, a herd of elephants, a 3-tier cake and 2 harmonious household scenes. This activity provided opportunities for fun, creativity and teamwork.

(4) Case studies. Each group discussed a case study and then presented their conclusions which provided the bases for general discussion.

(5) Barbeque and singalong. On the last day of the Camp Workshop, participants had a barbeque dinner. After dinner, they played indoor games, danced and sang songs.

(6) Role play. Each group presented a role play on the following themes of their choice: the reluctant bachelor son, taking advantage of others, the problem child, the wrong approach, and family reunion. Each role play was followed by a general discussion.

(7) Sports and games. These were organised in the morning and evening. Some did physical exercises, some went jogging and some played football.

At the end of the Camp Workshop an evaluation was conducted. The findings indicated that participants were pleased with the workshop programme, residential facilities and other arrangements. Many participants felt that the Camp Workshop had achieved its objectives, and suggested that more such workshops be organised to promote 3-tier family living among Singaporeans.

Prospects

In recent years the government has shown great concern for the increasing number of senior citizens and their problems. In 1981, the Singapore Council of Social Service conducted a study into the social policy and welfare services for the aged. Two years later, the Ministry of Health formed a Committee on the Problems of the Aged to study the problems of the increasing number of people aged 60 years and above in the population and their consequences in society, and to recommend measures to prevent, ameliorate or deal with such problems. The report of the Committee entitled 'Problems of the Aged' was published in February 1984. After the General Elections in December 1984, a Ministry of Community Development was set up. Among other things, this new Ministry will look into the problems of the aged.

The various senior citizens' organisations have been providing adequate social and recreational activities for their members. However, there is a severe shortage of continuing education programmes catering to better educated senior citizens. There is also a shortage of pre-retirement training programmes for potential retirees. To overcome these problems, the Department of Extramural Studies has planned to organise in collaboration with SAGE a residential academic programme for senior citi-

zens at the University during the long vacation. The programme will be somewhat similar to those of the Elderhostels in the United States and Canada. The department will also assist the People's Association in conducting pre-retirement training programmes on a regular basis. With the support of the business community, such training programmes can actually be conducted in-house during office hours for employees who are soon due for retirement.

Adult education and older adults in Africa

The ICAE in collaboration with AALAE is planning to carry out a study on the situation of older adults in Africa during 1985/86. This study expects to include, among other things, a survey of the role and place of older adults in traditional African societies, the changed situation as it prevails now, the differences between rural und urban areas, and how the older adults are used as resources in adult education.
Anyone with some experience in this area of work and who may be interested in carrying out the proposed study is requested to write either to:
African Association for Literacy and Adult Education AALAE — P.O. Box 50768 — Nairobi — Kenya, or International Council for Adult Education ICAE — 29, Prince Arthur Avenue — Toronto, Ontario — Canada M5R 1B2.

The deterioration in the relationship of the elderly to the working population, the often quoted change and the rejection of traditional norms are giving cause for concern. Can old people still look to the future with optimism?
Synghan Kim is Director of the Institute of Lifelong Education, Korea Air and Correspondence University in Seoul.

Synghan Kim

Lifelong learning Educational opportunities for the elderly in South Korea

I. Introduction

The Republic of Korea is perhaps the first country in the world to provide a nation with the constitutional right to receive lifelong education.

The state, accordingly, is required by the Constitution to set up educational strategies and necessary institutions towards that goal. But, it is important to remember that a majority of the people has yet to realise what the constitutional provision for lifelong education in fact means. On the other hand it is imperative that everybody should realise the importance of educational strategies for the elderly as a means of assuring the improvement of the quality of decent living.

The elderly today have rendered their share of contribution to the development of the country which deserves recognition, and then there is in Korea the tradition of filial piety or of revering the elderly. What is most important, however, is that the whole nation should realise that the elderly are entitled to the right of human dignity and decent living up to the moment of their death, and that adequate welfare policies for the elderly, including the expansion of educational opportunity for them, are directly related to the security and prosperity of the nation.

Looking at the demographical situation

It should be noted that in the supported population, the aged population grows rapidly and substantially, while the youth population decreases, owing to the family planning campaign that has been going on since the early 1960's. More specifically, the rapid increase of the aging index, i.e. the ratio of the aged population to the youth population, requires the greater concern by the government about increased funding and a more comprehensive policy for the aged, in particular, the policy for expanding educational opportunities for the elderly.

However, the problem of the aged in Korea has not simply been caused by the demographical factors of the aged population's growth.

Rather, it has been more directly affected by the social factors which have emerged since the early 1960's, such as the urbanisation of population resulting from the rapid economic development and industrialisation of Korean society, the advent of nuclear families owing to increased social mobility and the decline of the traditional sense of values and norms. In addition to these social factors, however, it is also clearly expected that the rapid increase of the aged population both in number and structural ratio, the increased ratio of the aged population in the supported population and, especially, the rapid increase of the

aging index will precipitate serious social problems in Korea in the foreseeable future.

II. Educational opportunities for the elderly

A survey on »Social Indicators in Korea« conducted in 1983, sampling 16 000 households throughout the nation, said only 31.8% of the interviewed took preparatory measures for their old age. And nearly 70% of the Korean people aged 14 years old and over had no idea how to prepare for life in old age. By these two indications, it becomes all too clear that the problem of affording educational opportunities for the Korean elderly is of paramount importance.

The survey also indicated, the poorer their educational background, the less likely they had any future plans. The Korean people's attitude concerning life in old age is also revealed in the survey.

Only 36.6% of those aged 14 or over are prepared for earning their livelihood in old age, while the remaining 63.4% want to depend on their sons and daughters or on social welfare programmes.

A more detailed picture of the problems of the ageing in Korea is well summarised in the Report of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs of the Republic of Korea, which was presented to the World Assembly on Aging in 1982.

The report says that most Koreans, except farmers, retire at around sixty years of age. The way of spending their leisure time is a major factor contributing to the happiness of the aged themselves and can be a great contribution to the society.

The leisure activities of the aged, therefore, may be examined under the aspect of rest and recreation that give an individual

comfort and satisfaction. They may also be examined from a social point of view whereby the elderly not only can improve the quality of their life but also contribute to the development of their neighbourhoods and local society by taking part in lifelong education or social acitivities.

As far as personal hobbies and recreation among the elderly people in Korea are concerned, TV watching and listening to radio programmes are their most favourite pastimes. And playing traditional Korean card games, baduk and janggi come next. Among other recreations are going for walks, travelling, gardening, attending sports events and listening to music. In the case of women, there is knitting, needlework or cooking. Some aged people, of course, spend their time just doing nothing.

But it is worth noting that playing with their grandchildren is still one of the greatest pleasures to most elderly people in Korea. When not playing with the grandchildren, they help with their care and with domestic chores.

Social acitivities in which the aged take part are rather limited. For example, most of the aged do not participate in political activities, educational programmes or group activities, hobbies or sports. About 33% of the total number of the aged are engaged in regular religious activities. Such a low degree of participation in religious activities is not surprising since more than half of the old people in Korea do not seem to have any institutionalised religion. About one third of the rest of the elderly people sometimes attends social meetings and a similar number of the aged go to a senior citizen's centre for the aged in the community to socialise with others in their age group.

Most of these active old people are males as most females seldom participate in social activities. The aloofness of older females in social activities is a traditional phenomenon.

According to a recent survey, however, most of the aged fe-

males in reality want to participate in social activities. It would be, therefore, a great contribution to society to encourage them to participate in social activities. This is an important national task for the future, especially from the point of view of planning the educational programmes for the aged.

It is true that educational programmes for the aged have greatly increased recently. For example, senior citizens' schools began to appear in 1972 and, as of 1982, it is reported that 18 senior citizens' colleges and 1118 schools of similar nature have been in operation throughout the country. In addition, the government is currently encouraging the introduction of elderly people's classes in every primary school. And many primary schools, especially in urban communities, run such classes so successfully that no less than 10 000 elderly people in Seoul gathered in a rally to demand the establishment of a national body to govern their educational programmes.

In senior citizens' colleges, a nine-month course, meeting for two hours once a week, teach techniques for the operation of old people's classes and activities to the managers of senior citizens' schools and various elderly leaders. The major purpose of these senior citizens' schools and the old people's classes is to provide them with programmes of extensive lifelong learning, such as understanding in human culture, health problems of the aged, the current issues of world affairs, etc. Such educational opportunities give the aged not only more flexible adaptability in a changing society but also an opportunity to come together harmoniously with others and a chance to make use of their leisure time in a most productive way. At present, most of these educational programmes in elderly people's classes are in their initial stage of development and lack a supply of human and financial resources. Nevertheless, it is quite certain that their expanded role and development will in the near future bring about tremendous impact upon the welfare programmes for elderly people of the country in general and particularly the lifelong education programmes.

Two questions were discussed in a wider context at the World Assembly on Aging:

1. How can education help to solve the problems facing the older adults and enrich the lives of the elderly?

2. How can education help to ensure that wisdom, experience and understanding of older adults is used to enhance the social enrichment of family and community, as well as to contribute to national development?

Each question bears direct relation to the two issues that had been characterised by the Assembly als 'humanitarian' and 'developmental'.

The humanitarian aspect relates to the specific needs of the aging persons. In particular, attention should be focused on health, housing and environment, social welfare, income security, educational opportunities and family, as these aspects are most directly concerned with the needs of older people. The developmental aspect considers the question of the 'aging populations' within the context of society. In particular, these issues are concerned with the aging of the population and the effect of population structures in social and economic development, including, in particular, integrated rural development.

Some closing remarks:

1. The nation's big cities seem to have almost entirely deprived their older inhabitants of the sense of meaningfulness in life, thus leaving to most of them (41% of the respondents) deep-felt loneliness and solitude;

2. In spite of their willingness, most of them could hardly find a chance of getting a job to rely on their life in old age. Except very rare cases, no firms in the country are willing to employ these elderly people even for such minor positions as jani-

tors or dustmen. Nor was there any manifested policy of the government to place the elderly in appropriate jobs.

3. Even among the big city dwellers, a substantial number of old people (58% of the respondents) had no formal schooling. Naturally, many of them are very keen and enthusiastic about receiving education.

A new volume of the »Nottingham Studies in Theory and Practice of the Education of Adults« is available now:
Adult Education and Political Systems, by W.E. Styler.
The publisher gives the following information:
This book deals with the relationship between political systems and beliefs and adult education. In the first part it outlines the expansion of adult education in a world scale since the second world war and the ferment of ideas relating to it. It then proceeds in the successive parts to examine the Western democracies, the Communist states and the countries of the developing world. In the final part the political principles which should govern adult education are discussed and it is argued that from a political point of view the performance of adult education in the Western democracies has been disappointing. It puts forward proposals towards improving the situation.
The book can be ordered from:
Publications Unit, Department of Adult Education, University of Nottingham, C Block Cherry Tree Building, University Park, Nottingham NG7 2RD.
Price: Pounds 12.95 plus 1.50 p&p

Mirok Li, Korean scientist and philologist, had to flee his country in 1919 because of his participation in student demonstrations against Japanese oppression. He lived in Munich up until his death in 1950. As a writer he knew how »to build bridges of understanding between the eastern and western worlds«.
For this reason we have taken up his description of a Korean burial ceremony as a curtain raiser in order to bridge the gap to a difficult theme, for it is hard to approach the theme of »death« without reserve.
The text is taken from: »Mirok Li, Der andere Dialekt, Sungshin Women's University Press«.

Mirok Li

Burial cult in Korea

Old men often used to tell me that they had a good burial place. Up until a short time ago there were private cemeteries in this country where all the members of a family or of a clan, sometimes only a single individual, were buried. I could not share this joy of being buried in a good place after death. I was still too young, with my whole life and not death in front of me. Yet for many it was important to obtain such a place.

When was a burial place good or attractive? Not everyone knew this. Only certain men who had studied for many years were acquainted with the secret learning where the deceased could find

peace and where their descendants would flourish. When such an »earth expert« was called upon he examined the area according to the nature of the earth, the form and grouping of the mountains. There had to be veins which ran through the countryside. Certain mountain forms were called »blue dragons«, various spurs »white tigers«, both figures held in high esteem. If these surrounded a burial place which also lay on the right vein one had a »bright courtyard«, a burial place where the deceased would find eternal rest. A place where »one's bones would turn to gold«.

The burial itself usually took place in the presence of an earth expert. He determined the day and the hour of the burial. The long funeral litter on which the coffin lay had to be carried with extreme care by twelve men dressed in yellow linen. These pall bearers formed two rows of six. The thirteenth man stood on the funeral litter in front of the coffin with a mourning bell in his hand. He took up the lament, the twelve men joined in. The procession slowly moved out of the courtyard into the street. The mourners in their traditional funeral attire walked behind the litter. The men often rode on horseback. The women were carried on litters veiled in white. Whether one rode or went by foot the laments and prayers were muttered constantly. It was only beyond the town that the procession moved on in silence. The thirteenth man was the only person who still threw perforated round pieces of paper on the road — money for the evil spirits.

The chosen place of burial often lay a long way from one's home. The sad procession made its way out of the city before sunrise, past villages, wading through numerous streams, climbing higher and higher from hill to mountain. The funeral litter was not allowed to sway even on the most dangerous mountain paths or cliff faces. Several men had evened the way the day before for this purpose. Towards evening one could see in the distance the funeral tent where the burial diggers were awaiting the procession. The thirteenth man on the litter took up

the lament again. His voice sounded sad and eerie in the evening stillness of the mountains.

As soon as the funeral litter was placed in the tent the exhausted mourners were cared for by the others. They received physical and spiritual nourishment while a few men prepared the final ceremony under the direction of the earth expert. After the mountain spirit had been given an offering of wine and rice and the coffin opened during the saying of prayers, the deceased was lowered into the deep limestone grave and covered with twelve planks. The burial diggers shovelled back the earth, the mourners paid their last respects. Soon a round burial mound arose.

A man then had to be found who lived near the grave and could look after it — a »grave protector«. He had to see to it that the burial place was planted with grass and that an attractive pine forest grew around the burial grounds. It was also his task to ensure that no alien grave was dug near one's own.

For the last twenty years Korea has had communal cemeteries. It is no longer possible to have a private place of burial. The earth expert is superfluous now. No one visits graves any more, no one brings the deceased an offering. No one believes in the grave and in life after death. That was only superstition, one says. Whether the Koreans now have a better faith, I truly don't know.

The following article is part of DVV's working material and was published under the title »Un-Ruhestand« (restless retirement) by the Adolf-Grimme-Institute, media institute of DVV. The material is intended for tutors and organisers. It contains proposals (going beyond the traditional courses of coffee afternoons, music-making and prayers etc.) for an active and interesting education for the elderly which is ready to deal with the problems directly confronting old people in the FRG. One of these problems seems to be death — for everybody, especially the elderly. The following excerpt is intended to give an idea how the attempt is made to bring up this theme of »death« in a group of elderly people in a Western country. What did we find important when choosing this article? The sensitive way the theme is approached, the proposals for initiatives and the role of the tutor: not detached from the theme, but questioning and ready to learn.

Death, an indefinable theme

Key-points on the theme

»I talk about death because I wish to live« — this sentence embraces the thoughts which have primarily concerned us in relation to the theme of death and which are summarised in the following lines:

- A platitude: Death is a daily event, a foregone conclusion in our life.
- And yet, to a large extent, we exclude dying and death from our lives, we don't let ourselves be affected by what we see or, if possible, we look away.
- We try to live our life without being conscious of its finiteness.
- If we are directly confronted with death we are often unprepared and helpless. We experience this in our difficulty to relate to the dying and those in mourning, in our inability to convey our feelings of grief, to confide in others our fear of death.
- Our difficulty in accepting death as part of life has little to do with individual incapability but rather with social conditioning and changes.
- Earlier, the death of a close person was a public event at which everyone, even the children, were present — it happened before the eyes of all. Today death takes place aside from everything, in hospitals, old people's homes, in sick rooms or occasionally at home but then in an isolated corner.
- Why? Because death reminds us of a certain limit; it is a disturbing factor in a society ruled by the belief in limitless growth and achievement.
- To accept death as part of life therefore means to swim against the current.
- We can learn about death by becoming conscious of »minor deaths« in our lives: separation from good friends, farewelling of plans.
- We can learn about death by offering the sick, the dying and those in mourning our help and companionship.
- We can learn about dying by not closing our eyes to socially caused, avoidable deaths (injustices, wars).
- Learning about death is not a means in itself but rather benefits our life, it challenges us to a more responsible way of life. »He who cannot live, cannot die: And he who cannot die, cannot live.« (Jüngel)

What do we want to attain?

What I can attain when I place the themes of death at the centre of one or several of my courses, naturally depends on the group itself but also on what I make up my mind to do, what I believe I can take on. Quite frequently one is confused with the other. For example I don't dare to approach the theme myself, have misgivings, and convey my uncertainty to the group with the argument: »They don't want to talk about it.« Or I do make an attempt, perhaps gropingly, halfheartedly — anyway, in such a manner that failure is already programmed. »Look, that's not a topic for old people, you cannot burden them with such sad things.«

Yes, death produces perplexity. We are all afraid. And it is exactly because of this that it is an important, that is, vitally important topic. If we can talk about it, about our own fears and hopes, then we will not be weighed down with heavy thoughts, but freed from them; we will gain courage, courage to live.

Preparation

I will give a lot of consideration to the aims which I intend to set for »my« group, what steps I will choose. I will ask myself, for example, the following questions:

— Is the group accustomed to talking about different themes or rather accustomed to consuming what a lecturer has to offer?
— If death is talked about in the group then perhaps in such a manner that the real personal feelings are suppressed and hidden behind clichés free from emotion?
— Are there participants in the group who have just experienced the loss of a relative or a close friend?
— Are there participants in the group who are dangerously ill?

The last two questions indicate that it must be tolerated and understood by all when individual participants do not wish to par-

take in the discussion. There will be problems and questions which are too demanding for a discussion group and which rather require counselling or therapy.

And what can I attain?
Sometimes only small steps will be made.

— To introduce the theme of death in the discussion (where otherwise problems are usually concealed by breathtaking activity and feigned cheerfulness, this is already a very large step)
— To utter thoughts and feelings on death
— To reflect on one's own attitude to the dying and those in mourning; to see new possibilites
— To become aware of the relationship between life and death, to accept responsibility for one's own life, to become impatient when life is wasted or destroyed.

Preparatory work also consists of questions aimed at me, the discussion leader!

— When have I encountered death in my life?
— What are my thoughts on the theme?
— What feelings are awakened in me? (Perhaps I should write down such thoughts for myself.)
— Do I believe I can introduce the topic to the group?
— What help could I need in order to overcome barriers and uncertainties?
— Do I need an initial discussion with a colleague or a friend?
— Do I require further information? (Information about the group; more literature to become tuned in to the theme.)
— Do I believe I can show my own feelings, speak about my own thoughts, as one contribution amongst many, or do I expect this only of others?
— Would I like to seek out a colleague for the preparation, carrying out and following-up of the discussion rounds?
— Am I tempted to bring in an expert who can speak on the theme but who doesn't encourage discussion amongst the

participants themselves? (The vicar is frequently regarded to be the expert on death — this has been my experience with old people's groups. But are we not all »experts« in this sphere?)

More, important questions will occur to you, questions which make you think about the shaping of the discussion, make you put your imagination and interest to work.

It is certainly difficult, if not impossible, to express a personal opinion on death in a large group; or if it is possible, because the participants know each other well and because an atmosphere of trust prevails, then only a few — the most courageous — will talk and others (perhaps because of hearing defects) will understand little. Therefore one should definitely encourage discussion in small groups and only briefly talk about the results of the former in the larger group. The most significant thoughts will be expressed in the small groups.

What form of initiative can result from occupying oneself with the theme of death?

Perhaps many people are now thinking that this is a theme whereby it is above all important to reflect on life and death. Activities which extend beyond the individual sphere may appear to be superfluous. And yet they are part of it all, if we don't want to run into the danger of separating death from life, of relegating it to the »quiet room«.

Here are a few suggestions which can certainly be added to:
- to report on one's own experiences with the theme of death (in the group), e.g. to write an article for the local newspaper;
- to invite others (e.g. youth groups), to continue the discussion with them: to report on one's own thoughts, to ask for their thoughts;
- to organise a church service on the theme of death;
- to organise, promote a »group for those in mourning« such

as already exist for other problem areas (e.g. society for women with cancer);

— to form a group whose members are prepared to help the dangerously ill and the dying (however this group also needs counselling and further education);
— to form a group where the members are prepared to help the relatives of those dying so that transfer to a hospital or a home can be avoided; to include this service in already existent neighbourhood assistance groups;
— to found an initiative group which ensures that employees looking after their dying relatives receive paid leave (as is already being discussed in Sweden);
— to defend oneself against avoidable 'death in life' in the direct living area and elsewhere e.g. to support or found initiative groups against the discrimination of foreigners, against inhuman living conditions in old people's homes;
— to support life, e.g. the demand of youth for a 'house for youth', for an increase in minimum pensions for those incapable of working and for old age pensioners, liberation movements in the Third World.

Monika Völker's contribution was first published in the newsletter of the European Bureau for Adult Education No. 2/82. Monika Völker is staff member of the Pedagogical Institute of the German Adult Education Association in Frankfurt.

Monika Völker

Approaches to education for retired people in the Federal Republic of Germany

Continuing education for older persons at the moment encompasses three different forms: senior citizens' clubs, residential courses for retired people and conflict-oriented adult education geared to learning-by-example.

The oldest form, now considered classical, is the senior citizens' club with an educational provision. This type, brought to the Federal Republic from the Anglo-Saxon countries in the late 50's and early 60's, was adopted by an assortment of organisations, including churches, organisations involved in social work, local authorities and adult education centres (Volkshochschulen, VHS). Most of the clubs meet for an afternoon session either once a week or every fortnight, or even once a month. The »afternoon-tea» aspect is usually combined with an illustrated lecture or an interesting presentation on topics such as local and national history, eating wisely, general health and problems concerning social security and the making of a will.

Those using this approach are of the opinion that the subject matter is not so very important. Rather, more desirable is the creation of a relaxed atmosphere based on the assumption that these older people are not interested in learning but want to meet acquaintances with whom they can spend an enjoyable afternoon. Usually 90% or more of the participants are women who as a rule have had very little schooling for at least 40 years. A number of these women have had no vocational training, having concentrated their energy on the tasks around home and family. Another group, through involvement in typical women's vocations, has remained at the »bottom of the working world's barrel«. This 90% tend to associate learning with schooling — a form of learning having little in common with one's daily living situation. Such an attitude tends to repel the usual educational provision.

Representatives of the second approach work with another group of senior citizens and can, therefore, make other assumptions. Following the research on learning in later adulthood (late 60's) it seemed justified to offer older people the opportunity to continue their learning in a systematic context. The VHS's were particularly active in setting up separate educational programmes for retired people, an approach still very common at the moment. For instance, in 1981/82 the VHS Frankfurt offered courses of instruction for senior citizens (over 55). Some of the most intensive and prominent ones included: gymnastics, swimming, dancing, English, French, sewing and creative courses. In principle, older people receive the same subject matter as young adults. They are offered special opportunities for intellectual pursuits and arts and crafts in addition to mobility training. Dependent on the course content and the degree of contact of the VHS with the elderly, it has been possible for the VHS to motivate people with little educational background and eventually those with more education to participate in the courses. The courses take place during the day in order to minimise problems this group would be confronted with in an evening course and

this also diminishes the threat of younger people participating in the courses.

These special programmes for the elderly can, however, further isolate the young from the old: younger people often regard them as a playground for those wanting to improve their knowledge in a casual manner but who would not be capable of following general courses. The danger of this approach lies in the changeover to common programmes open to all age groups — programmes either no longer provided or perhaps even no longer sought.

In the third and newest approach, the elderly participants are no longer seen as a relatively homogeneous group which is characterised by its age but more as a hetereogeneous group of adults. The initiators of this new approach have criticised the old-age clubs and present courses for education for the retired as sidestepping the vital issues, forcing the individuals to solve them alone. They are aware that the life situations of the ageing cannot be improved by sparking a learning process but will depend on socio-political decisions for their execution. Their basic assumption remains centered, however, on the fact that adult education with a conflict-oriented approach and geared to learning by example, can help people to understand their situation and develop alternative strategies for action and solutions to their problems. Some of these will be related to the ageing process while yet others will result more from one's own personal and social situation in life and socio-political conditions. This type of course, based on the participants' total life situation, is designed according to the common problems and learning needs brought forward by the group. The programmes are thus related to the needs and interests of groups and do not offer definite subject matter. Essential to such an approach are intensive contacts with individual groups; for example, in certain neighbourhoods a special effort must be made to stimulate consulting between tutors and participants in developing the form and content of the lesson material to be used.

The problems arising from the analysis of living situations of population groups in this approach are defined in a way which is specific to the groups concerned, and should be dealt with in connection with the group. For instance, housing problems — although generally known to apply to many elderly people — cannot be dealt with in a general way. They must be dealt with in the framework of a learning process adapted to the particular situation of those concerned, e.g. inhabitants of old peoples' homes, elderly living with their children, those living alone. This approach may also offer the benefit of programmes which are not exclusively for the elderly: in so far as young and old both have the same problems, common learning will be made easier.

The International Council for Adult Education published the following title:
Combatting Poverty through Adult Education: National Development, Strategies, edited by Chris Duke
Croom Helm, London 1985, Pounds 17.95 in UK

We cite from the cover text:
The book consists of seven case studies by adult educators and researchers involved in adult education programmes in Africa, Asia and Latin America, each writing with the authority of first-hand experience. The introductory, linking and concluding sections draw out and highlight common issues and themes leading to conclusions about the potential of large-scale, mainly governmental, adult education programmes to effect social change.

The literacy debate continues. Since this journal gave stimulus to the discussion with its article »Cooperating or campaigning for literacy« in edition No. 21, anti-reactions were expected and they have arrived. A detailed comment by Professor Bhola on our article was published in »Information Notes« No. 3/84, edited by the UNESCO Adult Education Department, and in »Convergence« No. 3/84. We are including this article by Bhola, a »leading specialist in literacy«, as an introduction to a second round of discussion which we hope will produce positive results and contribute to the generally improved quality of the dialogue.

The editors would like to make a brief remark at this point. We hope that our partners will pass their own judgement on the reproach of paternalism and that of cultural relativism. The reproach of logical positivism appears to us to rest with a misunderstanding on the part of Bhola. The authors did not wish to advocate a position of logical positivism. The reality of hunger, misery and poverty, exploitation and oppression as well as that of the positive role which adult education can assume in bringing about change in society, is for us a fact which does not constantly need to be reverified. If we called for evidence or proof in our article, then only on the basis of the fact that the advocates of literacy as a pre-requisite for development and social progress have all too often and too easily obtained evidence and proof by means of historical anology, references to the coincidence of poverty and illiteracy and the confusing of correlation with causality. In contrast to this we wish to see literacy efforts being understood as something »simultaneous« and »additional«, as a large network, the logical definition of which entails more than causality, prerequisite and effect. Society for us — using Bhola's own imagery — is more than a two-legged being of which one leg signifies »literacy« and the other »social progress«.

Harbans Bhola

Without literacy, development limps on one leg

We need to be aware that in reviewing and evaluating our past experiences with literacy projects and programs we make a clear distinction between cases 'where literacy failed us' and 'where we failed literacy'. Too often it is we who have failed literacy by lack of commitment and resources, but then have blamed literacy for not having worked wonders for us.

We also need to be careful so as to not confuse 'what we **can** do' with 'what **should** be done'. Organizational missions have to be different for different organizations depending on whether they are national, regional or international and depending upon their politics and resources.

The organizational mission of a particular organization need not, however, become **the** mission for all literacy organizations in the world. What an international donor organization, for instance, can do internationally need not be confused with the needs and possibilities of literacy work in the Third World.

A new paternalism

The practical ideal that Third World countries should pursue is to generate the necessary political will, and to mobilize the necessary resources of the State and the peoples to eradicate illiteracy once and for all from their midst. Mass literacy campaigns can indeed serve as surrogates for the 'Long March' for the populations of developing countries; and mass campaigns will change the character and thereby the possibilities of the economies, societies, policies and cultures of nations as we enter the Third Millenium.

Third World leaders, policy-makers and planners should be grateful for the concern shown by the West in their development and for the technical assistance they are receiving; but they must be careful about the new paternalism imposed on them.

This new paternalism is telling the Third World that illiterates are not ignorant, but wise; that being illiterate can be dignified in its own particular way; and that illiteracy is no cause for oppression, exploitation and further impoverishment! Don't we know that illiterates are definitely 'relatively ignorant' — relative to the literate groups and educated classes; and relative to the needs for participation and democratization? Don't we know, in our bones, that illiteracy is oppressive?

The DVV discussion paper states that literacy can have a 'destructive potential' for traditional values, skills and cultures of non-literate societies. Along with questioning why literacy is singled out as a destructive and negative influence, one can question the understanding of the process of change. Indigenous values and techniques need not be frozen and preserved forever. Cultures are perpetually renewed, traditions continuously recreated. Our heritage should be an anchor, not a tether. New skills must be learned, including new communication skills brought to us by literacy. There must be mobility; psychological, social, geographic.

What kind of evidence?

The language of cultural relativism of the DVV paper causes surprise at its demand, in the logical positivist mode, for 'proved evidence' that literacy causes development. One might ask a set of counter-questions here to develop a perspective on the need for proof in the policy-making process:

Where is proved evidence that development actions in the Third World brought any development? Where is proved evi-

dence that adult education succeeded in educating adults? Where is proved evidence that literacy did **not** generate some development? Where is proved evidence that literacy in both developed and underdeveloped societies did **not** create conditions that are better than those that **might have prevailed** if illiteracy had remained?

The point is that the search for proof of the kind DVV demands is neither possible nor necessary in the policy-making world. Needed is a conviction that what is being planned for is plausible, credible, feasible and probable; and needed are values that will provide courage for those convictions.

What we hear about changes, if not in cognition, then in the conceptualizations of individuals, is credible. What we hear about the new social definitions of new literate individuals is credible. What has been found about the influence of literacy on the innovation adaption behaviour, on health habits, on family planning attitudes, on agricultural productivity and on the scholarization of new literates is plausible. What is being speculated about the liberating role of literacy in conscientization, organization and politicization of the new literates is probable. What literacy could do to the communication skills of the new literate and to the productivity of adult education and extension sectors is obvious and feasible.

A question of perspective

Planned change, we must understand, is not deterministic; and it is not linear. We cannot talk of literacy first and development later; or of development first and literacy later. The two must be undertaken at the same time, one reinforcing the other. The relationship is dialectical and probabilistic. We intervene within social and institutional configurations; we build new linages; we create and recreate environments; and we bring into communi-

ties resources both material and of knowledge; and we hope that change will come.

Literacy is not a prerequisite for development; it is a concomitant requisite. Literacy by itself will not bring development; but without literacy development will be limping on one leg.

The only strategy commensurate with the size of the problem of illiteracy today is the national, mass-scale campaign. The campaign approach can, of course, accommodate local variations and small projects, with literacy integrated into them. The basic question is one of perspective. We need literacy of all the people, by the people. The whole nation needs to go to school, not the chosen few who happen to be living in selected communities where donors happen to send some experts and some money.

Non-Formal Education in Britain
Sivadasan Pillai, University of Kerala
The book gives a well-informed from-the-outside-looking-in picture of the non-formal education programmes in the United Kingdom — National Open University, Extramural Studies Department of Universities, Worker's Education Association, Residential College etc., and critically evaluates their functioning. A historical perspective is also provided for the readers as also the implications for India.
Price: Lib. edition $ 10
Write to: Kalaniketan Publishers, Nandavanam, Trivandrum 695 001, India.

Bernd Pflug is working for the German Adult Education Association on a project of cooperation with our Sudanese counterparts. The following articles need no further introduction.

Bernd Pflug

Now I have learned the Sudanese word »musharaka« (= »participation«)

Four or five times I have begun to write a learned statement on literacy work, but every time I have failed to convince myself that the contributions were worthy of being read by others.

What I had attempted was to analyse the whole complexity of literacy from a philosophical angle for I thought that such an essay was still missing. Subheadings would have been literacy as knowledge, literacy as value, literacy and metaphysics, and literacy and ethics.

With such an essay I also wanted to make a plea against the lists of shoulds which are today attached to literacy, though literacy, in fact, is a simple practical thing which has been unnecessarily made complicated through the superstructure of non-formal education.

Thousands of experts and scholars are engaged (or engage themselves) in designing new strategies, plans, and research projects. It is inevitable that they are annoyed when people like

my colleagues from the DVV try to bring some fresh arguments into the sterile discussions and procedures.

Today a »litany of venerated terms« (Stephan Brookfield in »Adult Education Quarterly« 1983) is poured over people in the educational field. And as if this was not enough, a never-ending flow of concepts created by self-styled experts is confusing the adult education workers. I think more of us should be becoming tired of these terms and concept producers who are hardly doing anybody but themselves a favour.

These producers very often see others as mere objects who are at best utilized for their own career in publishing or research. Their inflation of words and meanings does not necessarily cope with their ability of more understanding.

On the contrary, its inherent trend of building up a wall between themselves and those they are pretending to love is obvious from their sheer lack of practical experience in literacy practice.

We all have to be very suspicious, not only with their lists of shoulds but also with the motifs of the men behind these lists (luckily women seem to be less involved in this business). Unfortunately only some of them, if one at all, have so far made another adult literate.

Dare I say that particularly our international champions of literacy have most probably had their only contact to literacy work while on 'field trips' or so during some of their many travels all over the world?

But let us forget for a moment this vexatious academic problem and turn towards »musharaka«. Maybe it will help us to understand one basic aspect of literacy work our campaigners so often neglect.

Written in the sand

To be precise, it was on a mild October evening in 1984. We were sitting in a corner of the big compound of the National Adult Education Centre at Shendi in Sudan. Shendi is a small town on the eastern bank of the River Nile, some 170km North of Khartoum, the capital of the country.

To be frank, I was not quite sure how I should proceed to make the lessons I had promised to conduct a success, i.e. a bit more lively and interesting than lectures usually are in a training course for adult educators.

It was easy to prepare a lot of notes about the topic »Common problems in teaching adults«. But how to put some of the advice I was ready to give to practice in the class itself?

I think many of us know this particular situation: a lecturer lectures about methods such as group work and two-way-communication — in a lecture. He or she tends to enlist and describe a host of beautiful methods, which would motivate and engage the adult learner, in a long and boring speech. The discrepancy between form and content cannot be bigger.

Moreover, I had to conduct these lectures in English to an audience of 40 of which only a handful could understand English. Thus, I was dependent on a translator. (Later we found that the translator, a teacher-friend at the Shendi Centre, did a wonderful job which proved that intercultural communication can occur even when some of the circumstances are not favourable.)

I do not really know whether I succeeded on that Shendi evening. The participants of this one-month training course were obviously polite enough not to give me the feeling of being a failure. They helped and cooperated whenever I asked them for a 'favour'.

So, for example, when I suggested changing the sitting order into a circle in order to face each other thus facilitating discussion among themselves. Nevertheless, not all of them consequently jumped onto the discussion-waggon, but at least a great number of them did join.

They also followed my blackboard arguments. Though there were besides me only a couple of them who accepted the sand as an eventual substitute for a normal blackboard when this was not available. Some of them were really angry when I recommended this. They replied that this would mean to go back. To go back to what? As if a blackboard in teaching was such a big step of progress in our civilization!

Their arguments in favour of the centrally-used blackboard in adult literacy appeared to me very formal-education oriented. And we had such beautiful desert sand under our feet in that corner of the compound. A small stick was all what we needed for writing. Not even this is necessary because learners can take their fingers to write. And how quick you can wipe out your mistakes! And how big you can write! There is no unusual piece of chalk which your hand cannot hold properly because it has never been used to it. And each and everybody can write at the same time! In all, my plead for the sand as a substitute for the blackboard was literally written in the sand, but it was not a full success.

However, and that was the prime experience for me that evening, I learned to write the Arabic word »musharaka« which means »participation«. In my studies of Arabic I had never heard this word. Yet talking about participation in a class, and trying to apply it in the same class, and using the sand in front of me as my own blackboard for »musharaka«, I was reading this word so often that I will probably never forget it.

»Musharaka« became my key-word that evening. And because I was so interested in it I was anxious to learn it in reading and

writing. I would not have been interested in many other words that evening, for instance in kitchen, flower or goat, because there was no connection to their content. Maybe only the word »blackboard« (which I already knew) and the word »sand« (which I looked up later) would have made a similarly strong impact on my own literacy work while teaching others.

The conclusion is clear: We adults learn when we are interested. We learn when we are fascinated by a certain content. Then we are able to learn even without modern aids. But if this enthusiasm is not there we may perhaps adopt a kind of technical literacy but never that which the original meaning of literacy also embraces: educatedness.

And this brings me back to my DVV-colleagues who have boldly pleaded for this educatedness as the wider concept (not only) in non-formal education.

This educatedness may include the technical ability to read and write. But educatedness can be obtained without this technical ability though. Whether the experts like it or not, this is a fact. A fact, of course, that could affect the career of the literacy experts. But they should not be worried: it does not appear that all the people on earth will become technically literate in our lifetime. Hence, there will be always a field for research studies, new concepts and strategies.

A postscript: I love reading and writing (not arithmetic), and I could not envisage my life without it. But shall all the people on earth have the same love?

Bernd Pflug

Are you literate? A collage

the seminar understood of course the multi-dimensional and continous nature of the literacy skill it was also understood that literacy was a compound of many relativities of the language of literacy of the subject-matter read and of the instrumental functions that literacy was assigned in different socio-political and cultural settings
ideal was the ability to read and write in the mother tongue however a regional national or even a metropolitan language such as english french or portuguese was to be acceptable as a language of literacy in particular political settings at some particular points in history it was understood however that if at all possible literacy should first be taught in the mother tongue or a local vernacular and literacy skills then transferred to a national or official language ...
the udaipur seminar also recollected and recognized the significant contribution of the international symposium for literacy september 3 - 8 1975 which in making the declaration of persepolis had considered literacy to be not just the process of learning the skills of reading writing and arithmetic but a contribution to the liberation of man and to his full development thus conceived literacy creates the conditions for the acquisition of a critical consciousness of the contradictions of society in which man lives and of its aims it also stimulates initiatives and his participation in the creation of projects capable of acting upon the world of transforming it and of defining the aims of authentic human development the echoes of the declaration of persepolis were often heard during the udaipur seminar

it is a weakness of some literacy programmes that they do not go beyond basic reading writing and numeracy skills and this has led to increasing demands for effective follow-up or better reading materials or post-literacy activity however many of these de-

mands by the very terminology used reveal a need for more internal co-operation in the struggle for literacy for literacy does not exist in a vacuum people become literate either at school or in adult education because they want to do something and this something has a content which is bound to affect other basic services besides education
what we are talking about here is the whole range of education services such as health and family planning agricultural extension post-primary skill training e.g. in craft skills for self employment community development and women's groups with educational goals such services have their roots in attempts to answer specific development needs like better hygiene better husbandry or the generation of self-employment in the last decade and in an attempt to bring them closer together they have often been called non-formal education in this report the term continuing education is used in the same sense

dear reader i have quoted these texts* to give you a chance to prove that you are literate and that you are able to read these texts even without fullstops and commas i am sure that you have been including them automatically while reading them as you probably do with these lines as well your reading might not be as fluent as usual there may be some pauses here and there but in all your are well versed in mastering these small difficulties it is by no means a matter of existence for you and indeed you are hardly troubled by these small changes i have introduced though i have hurt common agreements generations have agreed upon you may be disturbed by these texts in the first few moments but your adaptability is so high that you probably accept it now as a challenge what are some small signs missing in a few lines altogether and you want to understand this text even if it would contain utter nonsense which it certainly does not still the texts quoted above have been printed it is the literate's addiction to read and to understand and to think about what he or she has read once we have acquired a technique we want to use and utilize it this is a great desire we are not satisfied if we know but have no opportunities to apply this kind of knowledge

many of us are frustrated then we even take up these strangely-written texts to apply our knowledge but what about the other group this billion of illiterates in our world i am sure they have another knowledge

The question in the heading is: Are you literate. Sure, you are if you have read the pieces before. You might ask now, what about these texts, what about their way of writing? Why has this crazy author exposed us to such torture? (And a drudgery it is, indeed, to read such texts.) What does he want to convey with this?

- You are right to ask these questions. On the other hand, I don't see any reason to answer them. Why?

Because your questions are exactly the questions of many people who are sitting in literacy classes, who are feeling terribly bored by what is being taught them and how. Many of them don't really see any sense in acquiring skills we, the experts, may define in hundreds of ways. And then drop out — as you have maybe dropped out from the above collage...

* from »The Promise of Literacy«. Report of the International Seminar on Campaigning for Literacy, Udaipur, India, January 4 - 11, 1982, 1983; and from »Cooperating for Literacy«. Report of an International Seminar held in Berlin, October 1983.

Mutual Aid Universities
Eric Midwinter, Croom Helm Ltd.
London 1984, Pounds 14.95
A recommendable collection of essays dealing with the University of Third Age in Britain. This University gives older people the opportunity to mobilise their own energies and control their own education in future.
The authors are concerned with the inadequacy of traditional views of education as a process which only matters for the young and which takes place only in the formal sector.
»Mutual Aid Universities« provides a forum of discussion for adult educators. It expresses some radical views and emphasises the need to formulate a new response to the educational system.

In »Adult Education and Development« No. 23 we mentioned a report edited by the **ICAE** which dealt with the role of adult education in community involvement in Primary Health Care: »Our Own Health«. In addition to that brochure ICAE has now published a complementing publication on the same topic: **»Organizing for Health«.**
In 9 case studies the importance of community involvement for health projects is flashed out and ways are shown how adult education can help to develop Primary Health Care. The book is pleasant to read and the excellent lay-out is remarkable.

Women and Disability
This is a development education kit designed
— to make people aware of the situation of disabled women;
— to help show the link between poverty and disability as well as between the status of women and disability;
— to encourage individuals and/or groups to stimulate creative action with regard to prevention of disability and the social and vocational integration of women with disabilities.

If you want to receive a kit for your own work, please write to: Development Education Centre, UNICEF Office for Europe, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva, Suisse.

84

Kamla Bhasin is sociologist and works as a Programme Director of FAO, Freedom from Hunger Campaign/Action for Development, for South Asia. Although her article shares common points with Lalita Ramdas' contribution, it also contains far-reaching, important aspects which examine, in particular, the function of literacy activities for women. We therefore decided to include it in our journal. In this context we would like to invite our readers to report on their own experiences with women's programmes as we intend to focus on adult education programmes by, with and for women in one of the next editions.
For those readers who wish to write to the two authors, here are their addresses: Kamla Bhasin, FAO, 55 Max Mueller Marg, New Delhi 110003; Lalita Ramdas, ANKUR, Society for Alternatives in Education, B 41 Nizamuddin East, New Delhi 110013.

Kamla Bhasin

WHY and HOW literacy for women: Some thoughts in the Indian context

Before launching a nation-wide movement to eradicate illiteracy among women there are certain points which need to be thoroughly discussed. The first main point is why such a campaign? What is the analysis on which the launching of such a campaign is based? It is necessary to ask and answer this question because often such campaigns (like the national campaign for family planning) are based on false premises and assump-

tions and give slogans and arguments which are outright offensive and insulting to the illiterate.

Often campaigners for literacy start with statements like — »illiteracy is an offence to mankind«. They ask »What is the difference between animals and illiterates?« Some of them assume (or at least their arguments give the impression of such an assumption) that illiteracy is the same as ignorance and lack of intelligence. Such statements are outright false and offensive to the millions of illiterates in the name of whom such campaigns are started. These statements also smack of a patronising attitude.

Because illiteracy is widely prevalent among the poor it is often taken to be a cause of poverty, exploitation and the inhuman conditions of the poor. Conversely literacy is expected to be the remedy for the removal of poverty; the magic word which will open all doors for the poor. These assumptions need to be challenged because like the family planning propaganda, they divert attention from the real issues, they catch the wrong end of the stick and worst of all they make the poor responsible for their own poverty and misery. The messages which come through are »The poor are poor because they bear too many children. They are poor because they are illiterate.«

A campaign for literacy which is not based on scientific analysis of socio-economic and political realities and which does not explicitly talk about the actual causes of poverty and how becoming literate can and will help the poor, can only end up perpetuating the false assumptions and confusing the real issue.

It needs to be stated unequivocally that there is no causal relationship between illiteracy and poverty nor is there any evidence that literacy precedes development or just by becoming literate people have overcome poverty and exploitation.

In the developed countries universal primary education and lite-

racy came after the process of development was well on its way.In countries like the People's Republic of China, Vietnam and Cuba where millions of people were made literate in a short span of time, the literacy campaign was part of a process of revolutionary change and not a separate campaign. The relevance and usefulness of the skill of literacy is also not the same for all societies. It is related to how literate the way of life or environment of people is.

Literacy, or for that matter even higher education, does in no way ensure more rational, scientific and human bahaviour. Literacy and education alone also do not ensure a socially responsible behaviour. In fact the major problems threatening our world today (nuclear holocaust, over-exploitation of natural resources, environmental pollution, the increasing gap between haves and have-nots, vulgar consumerism etc.) are those which are created by societies and people who are not only literate but 'educated', and scientifically advanced.

At the level of an Indian village, it is the literate and the educated (middle men, money-lenders, petty bureaucrats, local politicians) who exploit the poor masses. In fact I can never forget what a tribal once told me »We are not as afraid of wild animals as we are of the 'educated' people. We run for our lives when we see someone with white and clean clothes.« By people with white clothes, he meant all those who do not earn their living by physical labour. They can keep clean because they live off the labour of others. They use their literacy and education to dupe and exploit others.

In the context of the proposed movement, what we are pleading for is a clear and scientific analysis of the structure of poverty and exploitation in our society which prevents 75 percent of the women from not only being literate but also from being treated as equals, which prevents them from leading a hunger and disease free life.

We are of the opinion that literacy alone is no solution to poverty and exploitation and we are also convinced that illiteracy cannot be wiped out without a wider movement and struggle to wipe out poverty, exploitation, maldistribution of resources. Those who are saying eradicate illiteracy, are they also saying eradicate hunger, poverty, exploitation? What is their strategy for that? The strategy for eradication of illiteracy has to be part of and related to the strategy of removal of inequalities and exploitation.

With regard to women, we have to ask some additional questions like — are we also talking of eradication of inequalities between men and women, removal of male domination and patriarchy? How will our literacy campaign ensure this?

The target to eradicate illiteracy by 2000 is totally unrealistic.

Regarding the slogan eradication of female illiteracy by the year 1990 and even by 2000, we are of the opinion that such a target is totally unrealistic given the present state of our country and the kind of leadership which exists. Realisation of such a slogan requires a high level of political commitment and political will to erdicate poverty, to reduce the widening gap between haves and have-nots, to stop the further marginalisation of the poor and of women. It also requires a nationwide network of committed workers of all kinds, at different levels, and relevant literacy material in different languages. Unfortunately, none of this is available. Moreover, literacy is neither a felt need of the poor nor is it a skill which they perceive as the most important one to help them improve their lives. Because of this, such a campaign is not likely to spread like wildfire. Our experience of National Adult Education Programme which had the entire government machinery, a very large number of voluntary organisations and vast amounts of money behind it, also does not provide much hope. In view of all this, why give a slogan which we know is unrealistic, why play another trick on the illiterates, why make

them even more sceptical of national campaigns? Let us set targets which are attainable.

Literacy: Another tool to domesticate the poor?

Related to the question of **why** such a campaign is the **what** or the content and method of literacy campaigns. All literacy classes, primers and campaigns have an underlying ideology; a set of implicit and explicit values and a purpose. In the past, in India, most efforts made to make people literate have not been related to attempts to liberate people or to empower them. Literacy and even education programmes have led to the domestication of people rather than their liberation. The content of literacy programmes has not (except in a very few cases) questioned the unjust and exploitative structure of our society. They have in fact been doing the opposite, i.e. strengthening and justifying the status-quo and the dominant ideology. The content of most literacy primers have not even been related to the real issues and lives of the poor, their deprivation, exploitation etc. The village community is shown as a harmonious one where every one lives lovingly and peacefully. The conflicts which exist, the perpetual exploitation by one class of another are never even mentioned. When realities are not discussed, when they are purposely ignored or beautified how can the process of any meaningful change even start?

The primers, in most cases, have been written by urban, middle class males for middle level, male farmers, and they propagate middle class values. At best these primers provide some information but they fail to provide any questioning attitude, a sense of confidence and self-respect to the working class masses.

To substantiate this point we would like to quote from an excellent paper by Krishna Kumar entitled »Politics of Literacy« (from Adult Education and Development, No. 19, September 1982) which gives an overview of literacy programmes carried out in various third world countries.

»The happy village life symbolised through illustrations and text in literacy primers is, of course, a figment of the imagination. Real villagers are more often characterized by rivalries and strife than harmony and community spirit.

No one who has lived in an Indian village can overlook the dichotomy between the dominant and the oppressed. Yet, the village literacy instructor is supposed to talk about a harmonious community. The primer he is obliged to use hides all the conflicts and fears that his illiterate pupils permanently face.

In the attempt to conceal real-life conflicts and modes of oppression, the literacy programmes follow a political and economic goal that is seldom stated in an explicit manner. This ideology consists of a plan to 'modernise' the illiterate sections of rural society by incorporating them in the prevailing patterns of consumption and control. The plan operates under the banner of 'social change', but its real intent is to make all strategies of change ineffective.

At the same time, it strengthens the existent pattern of authority and distribution of power in the name of evolutionary change and reform.

A typical literacy primer tells the learner how one poor peasant gradually became prosperous by making certain rational decisions, such as the decision to plan his family and to start a new method of cultivation. The gist of such narratives is that a man changed his economic condition by dropping a set of backward and disabling characteristics, and by adopting an alternative set of characteristics that were modern and healthy.

The underlying moral of this theme is succintly given in a Turkish literacy lesson: 'poverty and prosperity depend on the person's own ability'.

According to this economic theory, some people are rich be-

cause they are well-informed, hard working, and have the motivation to accept innovative ideas. Others are poor because they lack information, and because they are lazy and tradition-bound. Following this analysis, literacy primers exhort the illiterate learner to change his attitudes and behaviour along the lines offered in different lessons.

The areas covered by a typical literacy curriculum follow a certain mythology that is now a part of any development project sponsored by government or international aid agencies. A planned nuclear family, mother craft, sanitation, balanced diet, improvement of technology, a positive attitude towards bureaucratic services, and increased production in agriculture and industry are some of the recurring themes of this mythology.«

What is said here is true of most literacy programmes carried out in India so far.

We agree with Krishna Kumar when he says »A realistic curriculum for adult literacy cannot be developed without acknowledging the presence of deep-rooted injustice and conflicts in rural society. How can a programme that hides so significant an aspect of the life of poor peasant and the landless capture their imagination? Literacy classes have a poor turn-out rate because the curriculum taught in these classes does not relate to the life of the learners as it is. What it reflects is an artificial fantasy world which proclaims the success of the prevailing order.«

Primers for women perpetuating existing stereotypes

In order to see what messages, information and values are given through the existing primers for women we analysed seven such primers used in North India. These primers have been put together by the major government and non-government organisations who are pioneers of literacy work.

The main content of all these primers is housework, child-care, family planning. Although all these primers are mainly for rural women the only roles in which women are shown are that of housewife and mother. In fact one of the primers is called Grah Laxmi or the House Goddess. Out of seven primers three talk about marriage in the very first chapter. All these primers completely ignore the fact that 50 to 60 percent of rural women (all of whom are illiterate and therefore are the main 'targets' for literacy programmes) are also involved in agriculture production, they are farmers and labourers just as the men are. The reality of the primers is the reality not of the poor women but of the middle class women who sit at home and perform the role of »Grah Laxmi«. These 'grah laxmies' are shown as models of good women, who live within the four walls and are only mothers and housewives. The cultural norms of a small minority, i.e. the upper classes, are being imposed on all the women. The contribution of millions of women to agriculture production is being negated. In one primer women are being told about earning money but that is through sewing. Of what relevance and help can such primers be to the women who labour outside the house, who produce food, store it, look after the animals, bring fodder and fuel?

Besides questioning dowry, frequent pregnancies and one or two other social evils these primers question nothing else. The widespread male domination, the double burden of work on women, different kinds of discrimination practised against women etc. etc. are not even mentioned, let alone challenged. In fact in an Urdu primer there are women shown in burqua without comment as if being in burqua is the most natural thing to do.

The qualities being prescribed for women are the age-old ones of sacrifice, self-abnegation, living for others, docility, love, softness. There are stories of Sita, Savitri and Draupdi. There is talk of places of pilgrimage. All these are considered more important and necessary than information on the legal rights of women and social legislation, like minimum marriage act, dowry and in-

heritance legislation, marriage and divorce laws, equal wages laws.

There is no attempt made in any of the primers to initiate discussion on any issue. Information and messages are delivered as pre-packaged truths. The learners are not encouraged to pose any questions which challenge existing notions about women's position and role nor to form their own opinions.

Defective methodology

Like the content the methodology of adult literacy generally used has been wrong and in effect anti-people. Most adult literacy classes are run like classes for children. In most of these classes the flow of information and knowledge is one-sided — from the urban to the rural areas, from literacy teacher to the learners. The village adult who knows so much about so many things, who knows how to survive in the most adverse living conditions, is suddenly reduced to and treated as someone who knows nothing. The message which often comes through the literacy campaigns is that those who are illiterate are also ignorant, unwise, unintelligent. (This is perhaps yet another way for the literate elite to show their own superiority over the illiterates.) Such attitudes and behaviour towards the illiterate people instead of building up their self-confidence and self-respect further erodes it; this becomes another way of putting them down and of cultural domination. Because most literacy classes are in the main languages and not in local languages, people are given another complex and that is that »not only can you not read and write, you cannot even speak properly. The language you speak is no good.«

Such literacy classes end up being another farce and insult to the illiterates. Neither are such literacy campaigns meant to nor can they equip the poor to master their environment or to deal with the oppressors more effectively.

In the context of all that has been said above, it becomes not only legitimate but necessary to ask why a campaign to eradicate illiteracy? Why not a campaign to eradicate malnutrition or hunger? Why so much emphasis on providing literacy skills to women who live in an environment which is by and large not a literate environment? Why not a campaign to provide skills to analyse, or articulate, or organise; skills which are more urgently required? Is literacy the first thing the rural women want? Have we asked them what they want? Our own experience with rural and urban poor (both men and women) shows that becoming literate is not their first need or aspiration. Their urgent and basic needs in most cases are more income, clean water, fuel or access to health services. Unless literacy is related to the satisfaction of their basic needs, women are not and will not be interested in acquiring literacy. Imposing literacy from above can only frustrate the campaigners and alienate the illiterates.

The need is for a campaign to empower the oppressed.

We appreciate and share the feeling of those who are proposing the campaign to eradicate female illiteracy, that something needs to be done immediately to change the inhuman conditions of living of millions of poor women who also happen to be illiterate. All concerned people need to join hands immediately to take on the challenge, but the challenge we feel is not just eradication of illiteracy. This is only a part of the challenge. In our opinion the real challenge is to help the poor, oppressed, illiterate women not so much to read and understand the word but to read, understand and control their **world.** They have to be helped to learn to master not just the three Rs but their entire lives. They have to be helped to acquire the necessary analytical skill to understand the quickly changing realities. They must feel that they do not have to continue to accept and adjust to conditions of inhumanity and indignity. They must get the desire and power to change their own lives, to write their own destiny. Literacy by itself is no solution for the poor, it is not an adequate skill to

bring about any real changes in their life. Illiteracy is not a disease which needs immediate eradication. It is merely one of the symptoms of a very dangerous disease which is inequality, exploitation, poverty. Without attacking the diseases we cannot remove the symptoms. Let us start by doing a correct diagnosis because wrong diagnosis and wrong treatment can only delay things and make the disease worse.

We believe that what we need are consciousness raising campaigns, campaigns to eradicate superstition. We also need campaigns to remove hunger, malnutrition, exploitation, male domination. Literacy work can be part of these campaigns. It can be a vehicle to carry these campaigns forward.

In the context of any such integrated literacy campaign for women we need to ask the following questions:

— for which class of women is our campaign primarily going to be? If it is for the poor women then the content of all literacy materials should be related to their lives and roles.
— what **values** do we want to propagate?
— what kind of **role** do we want the women to have in the family and in society?
— what are the **qualities** we would like women to have?

It is the answers to these questions which should determine the **content** of the literacy material. Literacy primers should become the vehicles to bring about the desired changes in the knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of women. Folk media like theatre, puppetry, songs can also be very effectively used to provide information and initiate discussion.

A lot of attention needs to be given to the teaching **methodology**. The methodology used should be participatory and democratic; it should be such which increases the self-confidence, self-respect, articulation, analytical skills of the participants. It should encourage questioning, fearlessness, honesty. There

Lalita Ramdas

Illiteracy, women and development Questions and reflections

Introduction and background

Recently a workshop was held at Indore, Madhya Pradesh, under the auspices of the Kasturba Trust and the National Committee for the Eradication of Female Illiteracy, in order to work out guidelines for the launching of a National Campaign for Eradicating Illiteracy among women. This has provoked this present paper which is the outcome of the collective experiences of a group committed to exploring the potential of education as a powerful tool for development, working in an urban setting for the past seven years.

National Adult Education Programmes — 1978

1978 saw the birth of a radical-sounding and ambitious national drive for wiping out illiteracy from a target group of 100 million adults across India. Conceived and designed by competent educationists and bureaucrats, backed by a generous resource allocation (Rs. 1,500 cr. over a 5 year-period 1980 - 85), the content and policy statement was hard to fault.

Enthused by this euphoria, large numbers of institutions and individuals, Govt. and NGOs, from varied ideologies joined this national campaign. For a few it was a genuine opportunity to fight ignorance, creating an awareness of injustice and oppression, and mobilising millions across this land in what could become an unprecedented movement towards social and other change. For most it remained just another paper exercise, another source of unearned income.

Anatomy of an adult education programme — the micro picture

It was against this backdrop that 1978 saw the start of an unusual educational experiment in a small, little known Delhi school, where a group of formal school students became part of this national drive against illiteracy through the compulsory schools programme of SUPW (Socially Useful and Productive Work — a redefined version of the Basic Education and Work Experience concept). These students went out regularly as part of their timetable to survey, locate, assemble, teach and learn from their peers who were uniformly poor, illiterate, and either drop outs or pushouts from local municipal schools. More schools joined in — largely public/private schools — till today we now have approx. 400 student teachers from 6 Delhi schools working in their neighbourhood communities through an Inter-School Non-Formal Education Programme.

From children to women

It was a natural step to move from working exclusively with children to working with their sisters and mothers. It was equally simple to recruit eager volunteers from the same or nearby communities to work as 'teachers'. These women were also illiterate, below the poverty line, doubly oppressed by the inescapable squalor of poverty and the dehumanised conditions of urban life, and the oppression of being 'female' in such circumstances.

Caught up in the upsurge of optimism generated by radical rhetoric and the availability of resources from government and other funding agencies, many groups such as ours launched into literacy, functionality and awareness programmes for women with single minded intensity and hope. Today, we at ANKUR find ourselves with a large infrastructure of 14 fulltimers, 28 part-time teachers working in over 20 slum and resettlement areas in a wide range of 'developmental' activity covering more than 1500

children and 400 to 500 women and girls. The needs of those we work with are real and multifaceted, the intent and purpose of the workers sincere. However, we find ourselves facing several doubts, questions and challenges thrown up in the course of the work.

Illiteracy — a new disease?

Barely seven years have passed since one National Drive for Adult Education was launched, evaluated and all but suspended. What have been the lessons learned and the analyses leading to the launching of yet another 'National Drive for the Eradication of Illiteracy among Females'?

Starting with the very choice of terminology viz 'Eradication' — it indicates a belief that like malaria or small pox, the solution to the 'disease' of illiteracy lies in a set of devised formulae, administered dosage, set targets. Implicit therein is also the hope (myth?), as with NEAP that through this package deal of immunisation — the setting up of nonformal education centres, enrolling 30 learners per centre and mass producing syllabi and primers through NCERT and SCERTs, literacy **can** and must be overcome. Another underlying assumption is that once illiteracy is 'eradicated', all other associated problems will disappear. We are all too familiar with the common assumptions that:
PEOPLE ARE POOR BECAUSE THEY ARE ILLITERATE — illiteracy being equated with lack of intelligence.

PEOPLE ARE POOR BECAUSE OF OVERPOPULATION — the poor breed too fast.

All these assumptions are based on a certain analysis of the realities of the prevailing socio-economic-political structures which are often hasty and superficial. The solutions offered are therefore equally simplistic, namely that the answers to mass poverty must lie in launching mass literacy and family planning

campaigns. Since women are relatively easier to approach — let us make them the prime target for both drives — and soon poverty itself will disappear.

Reality today — the macro picture

Our own experience on a micro level, as also that of scores of voluntary groups across the country has not only proved these assumptions to be totally false, but also substantiated the macro level findings that even the educational targets set so bravely at varying points in our post-independence history have remained largely unrealised.

The situation is equally grim in the formal and the non-formal sectors, with universalisation of elementary education now targeted to 2000 AD or after; and NAEP evaluation revealing that barely 50% of the target group were enrolled, let alone having learned to read, write or gain control over their lives. All this despite a formal education network comprising over 650 000 schools and colleges, more than 3 million teachers, an annual budget of Rs. 3 000 crores, and Nehru's plea to education ministers in 1963 — »Our first plan must be for universal education. Everything else, whether it is industry, agriculture, or anything else which is important for us, will grow adequately only if there is a background of mass education.«

What went wrong? Why are we almost worse off than when we started off as an independent country over 35 years ago? Despite paper increases in literacy percentages, why do we still have a staggering total of 424 million illiterates in this country? Why are over 75% of our women illiterate in India which has had a woman Prime Minister for over two decades; where the first Indian has taken a trip into space; and where the first Indian woman has stood atop Mt. Everest?

Grass roots lessons learnt

The answers to some of these questions are framed below — these being postulates firmly rooted in experience to which we shall return briefly.

As long as Ankur's work remained confined to working through children and with children, it was relatively simple and possible to concentrate on providing an educational 'Service' or 'Opportunity', pushing out the more bothersome questions regarding the insidious structures of poverty, hunger, malnutrition, ill-health and injustice from which there was no escape for those with whom we worked.

But when we began working with the women in the community there was no longer any possibility of escape from a headlong confrontation with the fundamental issues of poverty and exploitation. Reading, writing, sewing and outings did not provide them or us with the solutions to the need for more and regular income — the stark reality of being unable to feed and clothe their children; of seeing their children fall sick and die; of the never-ending list of household chores; of standing in endless queues for water, kerosine, rations, even to see the doctor; of being beaten by drunken husbands seeking to escape their own misery; and of fighting to cope with the daily oppression of just being born female or perhaps having been stupid or unfortunate enough to have borne a female child.

To be poor and to be a woman — many were instinctively able to identify these as the root of many of their difficulties — and literacy played no role in their ability to make this analysis.

Literacy and poverty

The messages are loud and clear for those who choose to listen. In a country ridden with poverty and disparity, the basic need for

women, as for their men and children, is for **bread**, and for the means of livelihood which alone can gain access to food, clothing, shelter, education or health. For any programme with the 'weaker', the 'deprived' sections to be meaningful it must address itself to those major factors — namely the inhuman social and economic arrangements which exploit both women and men, and which keep vast masses in poverty and ignorance because they can only survive by doing so. If a mass movement is being launched against this 'scourge' of illiteracy, let us launch such movements against all else which is a scourge and an offence to humanity which we claim to revere. Logically this would mean movements against unjust economic structures which keep people ignorant; against the religious and social practices which teach and reinforce the subjugation of women; against an inhuman caste system banished on paper but still a stark reality for millions of Dalits, Harijans and tribals; against a grossly unequal distribution of national resources.

Education and development with women in focus

We strongly believe that literacy can indeed serve as a tool for empowering women to take control of their lives. But we share below our conclusions based on collective learning through working with and for women, without which a mere literacy programme has no meaning.

1. Literacy — whose need?

Very few groups of poor, illiterate women have actually **initiated** a demand for running pure literacy classes. These have generally resulted from the perceptions of others, often from the middle class, who initiate programmes, plan content and syllabus, write texts, and in the process impose their own culture and values system. More often than not such texts do not lead to or encourage **any** questioning of rural and urban Indian society, the

religious, class and caste tensions — none of these are even touched upon. Rather they concentrate on presenting an idealised, romanticised picture of a harmonious community which betters itself through hard work, modern methods and family planning.

2. Women lack political power

Women have little or no control over political or other decision-making at the 'basti' or 'village' or 'family' level. Where texts and methods extol the virtues of feminine patience, self-sacrifice and acceptance rather than encourage debate and questioning — there can be no question of literacy helping to empower women and leading to freedom from all sorts of bondage. All education for women should lead to a realisation that male domination and exploitation by the rich are both political issues which women must learn to fight and challenge **politically.**

3. Women seldom control money or property

Even when women earn — in field, or factory of office, the actual control over this income is not hers. Most forms of female labour (e.g. in the home) are invisible and certainly not seen as economically productive. Furthermore she herself is viewed primarily as 'property' by the male. Questions of dowry and its roots, of inheritance laws and rights of women, the need for economic independence and to understand her own capacity and contribution in the sphere of **work** — all these should form part of a literacy curriculum.

4. Women do not know, or control, their own biology:

Today 90% of Indian women have little if any control over their own bodies or biological processes — partly because of lack of

knowledge and largely because patriarchy ensures that these decisions are taken either by the husband or the state. A woman's biological role becomes her primary legitimacy; the procreation of sons alone gives and enhances her social status; biology is thrown at her in order to rationalise and legitimise her being confined to the home. Education can and must provide women with clear and concrete factual information as to their biological and sexual functions, encourage questioning of the idea that marriage and/or motherhood are the only available choices, provide support and alternatives where possible and needed.

5. Women need to create a new image — changing stereotypes

It needs to be re-emphasised that the present education system, books, the media, films, the family and all prevailing socio-cultural norms conspire and combine to perpetuate the existing image of women as weak, submissive, self-effacing; a non-aggressive daughter; an obedient, dutiful and faithful wife; a self-sacrificing mother goddess. Women themselves are so conditioned that they too unquestioningly accept this view of themselves, and denigrate other women who might choose to question or step out of this traditionally acceptable and pliable mould.

There is sufficient evidence of this trend in several content analyses of primers published by government and non-government agencies alike.

One such study of primers in N. India showed that the primary themes were of marriage, home-maker, wife, mother — the Grah Laxmi image. Barely any mention is made of those 50 to 60% of rural women who are as involved in agricultural production as men, nor of those urban women who slave in factories, in homes and on construction sites, more often than not earning less than men for equal work.

We need to create a body of dynamic, alternate literature where literacy may be an outcome of basic information on legal rights, minimum wages act, marriage laws; and where discussion and questioning as to desirable female traits are built into the methodology of teaching.

6. Women, religion and tradition

In a society where women are confined to the home by the combined force of patriarchical and social tradition, it is essential that a programme of education examines the roots of such tradition whether these be of religious or other origin. Women in all religious traditions have carried the burden of observing and preserving customs — whether of fasting for their husband and children, preparing for ritualistic observances etc. Yet, significantly, the same religious tradition imposes on women the idea of impurity, and confines them to playing a subservient role even within the 'Church'. Education can only be liberating if it supports and encourages a fearless questioning of custom and ritual — whereby women themselves can decide on what to observe and what to negate.

7. Education of men

Finally, if women are to be liberated through education, there must be a clear recognition of the role played by men in preventing women from going out of their homes and gaining access to equal opportunities — be it for education or work. This fear of losing control, and having to cope with the needs and changing situations of an emancipated woman, also needs an appropriately designed programme of educating men.

The challenge before us

In short we are asking for recognition at the national, political level of the true roots of female oppression which we see as the cause of female illiteracy and backwardness. The real challenge before us is to enable and empower poor, oppressed and illiterate women (as also her so-called better educated sisters) — to read, re-write and control their whole world, not just the written word. Women as much as men need to be involved in a conscious process of developing the analytical skills necessary to question existing structures and to examine and re-define their own place in these structures.

Methodology, motivation and training

For any of the above to happen it is essential that we begin with the creation of a vision, a framework, and ideology. How does one envisage this new society, these new men and women? What will be the values and the dynamics which should form part of this new world? These decisions in turn will influence and determine the choice of methodology and styles of functioning — participatory and democratic instead of 'top-down' and authoritarian; where teacher and taught can be seen as equals involved in a mutual search, where the teacher is at best a facilitator, a comrade and not an 'expert'. It is only when knowledge and learning become de-institutionalised, more humanised, that true sharing of knowledge as a tool for power and control becomes possible. Such teachers will learn as well as teach; help people challenge accepted beliefs, blind tradition and unjust structures as a first step towards bringing about fundamental changes for a more just and human way of living.

Education — a sub-system of society

In the final analysis, education **is not and cannot** remain **neutral.**

The system of education only reflects the dominant ideology and political trends in society. If today 424 m. Indian citizens (half of whom are women) remain outside all schooling, it indicates a serious lack of political will to change the situation. Millions of adults do not voluntarily choose to remain ignorant, nor do they lack intelligence. They bear silent testimony to the truism that development and education are inextricably linked, but they will opt for **that** education which has meaning and relevance to their lives and problems. Does education and literacy follow development, or can education itself function as a radical tool for development. Some countries like Russia, China, Cuba and Vietnam have found the answers to both illiteracy and hunger and poverty in certain collective political decisions. We in India have to urgently mobilise all our collective skills and resources in honestly raising the questions, searching for and finding the answers, and finally **acting** on the basis of continuing **praxis** and **reflection** in making these a living and working reality.

Once again India and literacy. Even if one took up an immanent point of view and could accept uncritically the demand for the eradication of illiteracy, the problem would present itself again at a quantitative level. The article by Hans Raj Gugnani provides information on this immanent financial problem. The following article was published in the Hindustan Times on 1. September 1984. Mr Gugnani is First Secretary (Education and Culture) at the Embassy of India in Bonn, Federal Republic of Germany. For your information: 250 rupees are approx. 21 US $, 1,250 million rupees are approx. 104 million US $ and 25,000 million rupees are approx. 2,100 million US $.
(1 crore = 10 millions; 1 lakh = 100 000)

Hans Raj Gugnani

Adult literacy by 1990

Total adult literacy in the age-group 15 - 35 by the year 1990 is the goal. The political will to achieve it has been manifested in two ways: (1) Acceptance of literacy as a basic human need as shown by its incorporation in the chapter on Minimum Needs Programme (M.N.P.) of the Sixth Plan document; and (2) the inclusion of literacy in the 20-Point Programme.

What does this mean in quantitative terms? The estimated number of adult illiterates in this age-group is around 11,5 crore. This figure, which is stated in the resolution on adult education passed by the Central Advisory Board of Education at its meeting in New Delhi on June 6 - 7, 1983, could perhaps be taken as

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the starting point for the challenging task to be completed by 1990.

What are the prospects of meeting this challenge? The end of the Sixth Plan on March 31, 1985, can at best see the coverage of approximately two crore. At an annual average coverage of about 40 lakh it should take at least a quarter of a century (or five more Plans) if not more, to reach the goal; and this too, if the further flow of illiteracy could be plugged effectively at the root through complete universalisation of primary education (U.P.E.) as well as through almost zero dropout rate at the primary education level. As the latter conditions themselves show no signs of achievement and viewed in the context of achievement rates in the past, the goal of total literacy in the age-group 15 - 35 by 1990 would appear totally unrealistic.

This then leads to two basic questions: (a) What should be the realistic target for the Seventh Plan? (b) How best to achieve the goal of total literacy among the target age-group in the shortest possible time if not by 1990?

Two factors

These questions can be answered adequately only in relation to two main factors: »availability of resources« and »per capita cost« of making a person functionally literate. The former should give a somewhat clear picture of (i) Plan allocations directly for adult education in the Central and State educational plans; (ii) possible contributions anticipated from non-government voluntary organisations, apart from government grants; (iii) estimated earmarking of funds by other government, semi-government and non-government agencies either directly for literacy (or indirectly for support of literacy programmes).

The per capita cost of adult literacy has to be related not merely to the definition of literacy in terms of census whereby persons

are deemed literates who »can read and write with understanding in any language«, but also in terms of functional and lasting literacy whereby the persons can make use of literacy in their day-to-day functions and with whom literacy stays for life and does not just vanish sooner or later after their leaving the adult literacy theatre.

Available Resources

It would perhaps be difficult to answer, with accuracy, these two questions. Firstly, no well coordinated exercise seems to have been done to get an estimation of the total availability of resources in cash or kind, from the various sources, other than the budgetary resources allocated in the Central and State educational plans for adult education. Secondly, even if some rough and ready estimates could be worked out, no scientific study exists to determine the per capita cost of »retainable literacy« in order to be able to work out as to how much of the target group could be covered by 1990 and how much more time will be needed to reach the goal of total literacy in the group.

The latest available exercise on per capita cost was roughly worked out in 1978 by the working group on adult education (set up by the Ministry of Education) which then assumed Rs. 80 as the effective cost for an adult learner plus Rs. 8 (or 10%) as the administrative cost plus Rs. 16 (or 20%) as the follow-up cost, i.e., a total of Rs. 104 per learner. Since 1978 the costing pattern has been revised: the remuneration of part-time instructors has been raised from Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 per month; the costs for teaching and learning materials has been substantially raised; the administrative and follow-up costs too have gone up due to inflationary reasons. Accordingly, even the most conservative estimates should put the per capita cost at not less than Rs. 150. This cost is for literacy only and not for 'retainable literacy', that is, the literacy which the learner must retain for day-

to-day use in his life time; or, in other words, literacy that is free from the risk of relapse into illiteracy.

The recent stress on so-called »post literacy« work for neo-literate adults is, in fact, a confession of the failure of literacy programmes in the past, as they failed to provide retainable literacy to the learners. After keeping them for about 10 months in the Adult Education Centre or giving them about 300 or 350 hours of teaching, the adults used to be left in mid-stream from where they could either swim through by their own efforts or sink.

The term »post literacy« would thus seem to offer an apology to the premature interruption of the learning process which had tended to prevent the retention of what had been learnt, thereby resulting in complete loss of what was regarded as investment and even generating among learners a sense of frustration. In fact, there should be no such thing as »post literacy«. Do we have this term for literacy acquired at the primary education level? What we thus need, is a composite or complete literacy course of longer duration than that of about 10 months or 300 - 350 hours for our target group to take them all to a point of no return, i.e., to a point from where relapse into illiteracy becomes rare. The per capita cost may prima-facie seem to go up from Rs. 150 to say Rs. 250 but keeping in view the finances we may separately allocate under a new scheme of 'post-literacy and follow-up', there may not be more than a marginal increase in costs, with far more rewarding results in terms of more secured returns from investments.

Assuming Rs. 250 as the per capita cost for retainable literacy what should be the total cost of covering say about 10 crore illiterate adults in the target group. In pure arithmetical terms Rs. 2,500 crore. A fantastic figure! The Sixth Plan had a provision of only Rs. 125 crore for adult education. To this can be added a few more crores from other sources. Can the Planning Commission and the funding sources put together take a steep jump from Rs. 150 crore in the Sixth Plan to Rs. 2,500 crore in the

Seventh Plan? If not, why set dream targets! !Why not be content with setting realistic targets within the constraints of mobilisation of resources from all possible sources?

Literacy revolution

However, if we must set a time-bound target of total adult literacy by 1990 for all illiterates in the age-group 15 - 35, we have to usher in a literacy revolution, firstly through massive mobilisation of resources in cash, kind and human-power; secondly, through shedding of age-old inhibitions and prejudices that may stand in the way of the success of the revolution, and thirdly, through adoption of innovations and untraditional methods. Revolution, however, cannot just be imposed from above, although it can be inspired from above by the leadership. The revolution should therefore have a strong inbuilt motivational force which is possible only if it is directly linked to such intimate problems of the masses as poverty and exploitation and also to such national problems as over-population. The literacy revolution must, therefore, from the beginning, get a meaningful direction aimed at a direct attack on the three major problems of poverty, population and exploitation.

How serious the political will is in inspiring a Literary Revolution is to be seen not merely through pious expressions embodied in the M.N.P. chapter of the Plan Document or in the Twenty Point Programme, but through concrete measures such as the stepping up of Plan allocations for adult education to say about Rs. 600 crore in the Seventh Plan.

The harnessing of the huge formal education systems is another promising catchment area for mobilisation of resources in cash, kind and human-power. A big potential also exists outside the formal education systems which has hitherto been marginally harnessed; e.g. local bodies, especially the village panchayats; co-operative societies; youth clubs; mahila mandals; social wel-

fare and voluntary organisations presently not involved in adult literacy work; trade unions; employers' organisations.

Potential areas

Two more, and perhaps, by far the most potential catchment areas for ushering in a literary revolution are (i) the religious communities, and (ii) the political parties. State policy has left them out of the grant-in-aid systems, which covers only non-government voluntary organisations, which should neither be communal nor political in character. Fear is at the root of this policy. The fear of the spread of communalism in a secular state, and fear of indoctrination of the masses by the political parties. Both these fears will prove unfounded if the state enters these two catchment areas with a scheme that entitles all religious organisations and political parties to state support, without discrimination, for running adult literacy centres for their members.

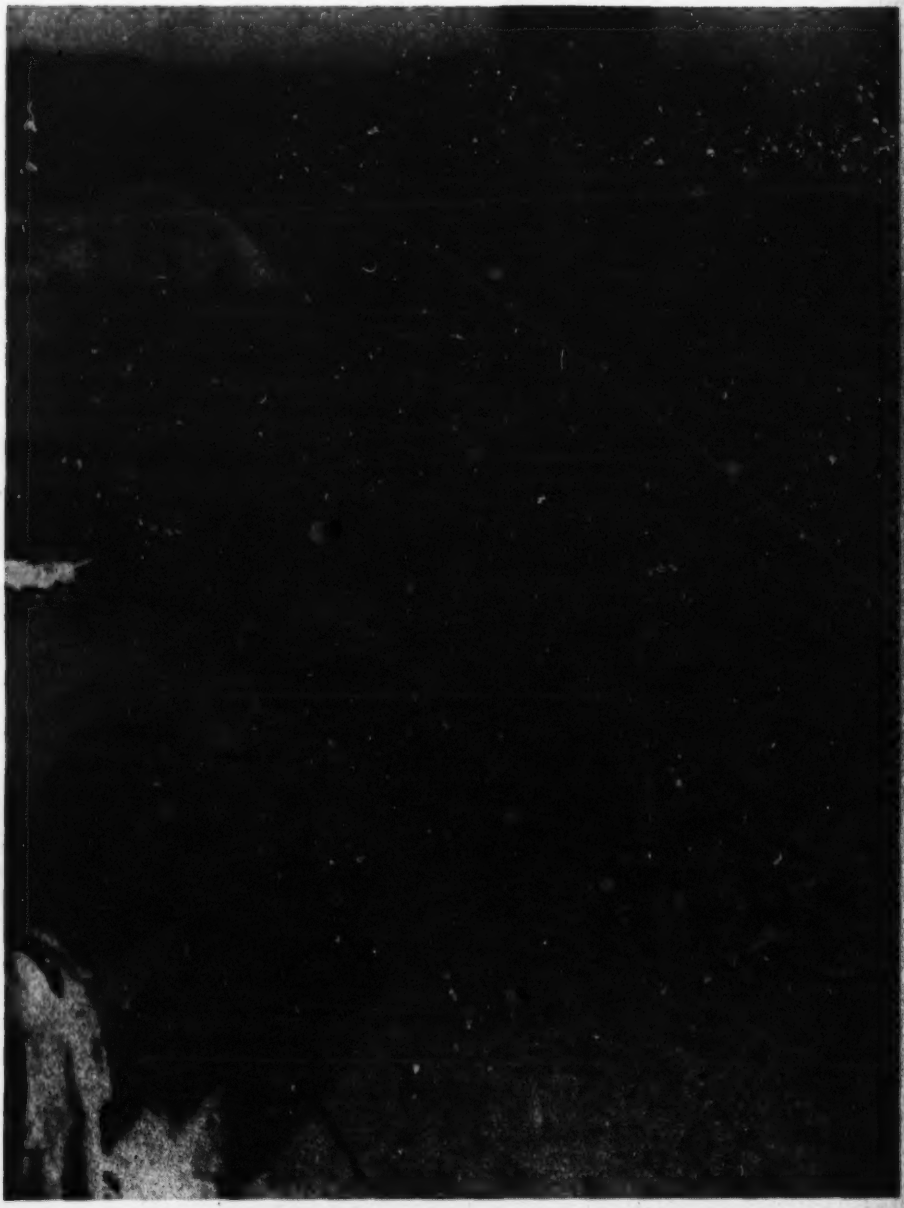
A literacy revolution must get meaningful direction from the start. Large-scale illiteracy is undoubtedly a matter of national disgrace. Yet literacy should not become the be-all and the end-all of the revolution. As stated earlier, it must aim at attacking directly the three major problems of poverty, population and exploitation. To fight poverty the content of the literacy programme must aim at the development of vocational skills of learners in order to improve their earning capacity. Several functioning literacy projects in the past have been successfully linked to developmental activities, e.g. agriculture, animal husbandry, handicrafts and other cottage industries etc.

Again, literacy can be turned into a powerful instrument to check population explosion. While adult literacy centres would provide excellent opportunities because of the captive groups gathered together for learning, the tactful use of such opportunities in promoting 'planned parent-hood' along with other literacy

contents, would be an important pre-requisite for achieving our goals as quickly as possible.

Exploitation of the poor people, rooted in their ignorance and poverty, has to be the third most important target of attack in the literacy revolution. Ironically, the main opposition to the adult literacy programmes comes from the beneficiaries themselves; they are uninterested as they neither see its value nor have time-away from their otherwise heavy schedule of earning their bread and butter. In the recent past the leadership has given literacy programmes to the illiterate adults, which carry a unique component of »social awareness« to arouse illiterate adults to rise in organised movements against the injustices and sufferings meted out to them, or the denials of several advantages provided to them by the state.

Yet, perhaps even this inclusion of a strong awareness as a component of adult literacy programme is not enough. What is perhaps needed is a powerful nationwide movement to organise the poor people to improve their standard of living not only as part of the adult literacy movement, but as a strong simultaneous effort to organise them into a powerful force to reckon with. This force should be made aware of the laws and regulations enacted by the government for their benefit as well as the many social advantages offered by the government and non-government agencies in various forms such as health, hygiene, several forms of subsidies to obtain goods and services at cheaper rates etc. Such a force, if organised would not only help in minimising the corruption practices indulged in by the field intermediary officials but will also strongly create in the people an urge to acquire literacy without which they have been suffering many a handicap.



Ranjit Singh is Joint Director of the Communication Centre of Punjab Agricultural University in Ludhiana/India. In his article he discusses the 3 L's which he believes to be essential in the carrying out of regional development programmes.

Ranjit Singh

Adult education and rural development

The majority of the population in developing countries is illiterate and lives in the villages. Development programmes started in various countries failed to improve the lot of weaker sections of the society because most of them were fragmented and limited in scale. Of the available developmental programmes, the largest share is claimed by occupational education, mainly in farming. These programmes are often of poor quality and spread so thinly that they have little impact. There is no agency or department responsible for maintaining the over-view of these programmes, for projecting further needs or acting as coordinator. These programmes operate haphazardly with neither priorities nor plans. It has also been observed that most of the agricultural production programmes concentrate their efforts on larger producers and major commercial crops while neglecting small farmers and local crops of key importance to subsistence families. Very few efforts have been made to diagnose the different needs of the clients. Social justice demands that equal opportu-

nities must be provided to all citizens so that they can live an honourable life.

Strategy. — Any development strategy which aims at improving the lot of the rural poor must aim at creating new productive assets for them. Thus, the setting up of economically viable schemes to launch the prospective beneficiaries into economically viable activities would be the main thrust of this strategy. The emphasis should be to help people to help themselves. A successful educational programme is one which is able to create awareness among clients and help them solve their problems collectively. Suitable support in terms of supply of raw material, marketing facilities, training and upgrading of skill has to be provided to make the programme a success. A household rather than individual approach needs to be followed for the economic uplift of the household.

It is of no use to improve the knowledge base for a particular rural activity, without examining the specific work situation, and the degree of freedom available to act on that information. Programmes should be those which help people to stand on their own feet, that genuinely encourage responsibility, intitiative, decision making and self reliance. If one does not integrate the programme of adult education in the plans of economic development, the aim of removing poverty will not succeed. Any programme of continuous education will not succeed in its objective if it is not going to provide 'living', 'literacy' and 'liberty' to target groups. Therefore, the model which is being discussed here is named the three 'L's' model of development. This model has been developed on the basis of certain selected development projects undertaken successfully by different workers. Three levels of the model along with suggestions for achieving each level are discussed below.

1. Living. — Any development programme must make efforts to provide a living for the target group. In order to achieve living, one should start with a survey to prepare an inventory of local re-

sources. It will provide the basis for identifying the development potential and from which suitable programmes for assisting the rural poor to earn their living will evolve. While conducting the survey, an inventory of human resources, economic activities, infrastructure and social and institutional facilities should be made.

The second step will be to identify a viable economic activity or activities for the target groups. While selecting an activity it should be kept in mind that it is to be within the reach of the available human and material resources. Adequate marketing facilities are also required for the success of the programme. The prospective plan has to be formulated carefully in consultation with the local heads of technical departments, leading banks and other institutions.

After selecting economic activity, the third step will be to prepare a plan of action indicating the location, quantum of credit required, agencies for provision of support in terms of input, technical supervision and guidance, credit and marketing. The operation of each activity should be confined to a village or a cluster of villages in order to provide guidance, input and marketing facilities.

The fourth step will be to provide orientation and training for the target group. They should be prepared mentally and physically to adopt a new activity. Once they are ready, technical training is essential for the successful adoption of the programme.

The fifth and final step is the actual launching of the programme. The change agent should help the people in arranging inputs including credit so that they do not have to face frustration. Adequate technical guidance and input should also be provided. Change agents have to take special care at the initial stages to ensure the success of the programme.

2. Literacy. — At this level when the people have started earning their own living and are free from the clutches of the influential villagers, the literacy programme must be launched. They might

have realised by this time the importance of literacy because they need literacy skills for keeping their records and reading literature. They will take keen interest in the literacy classes because they have felt the need for it. Teaching of adults is different to school teaching. Therefore, teaching programmes should be suitable for the adults. The content should provide them with knowledge about their profession as well as to enlightening them about their worth as a citizen of a free country. Knowledge and information derived through literacy will broaden intellectual horizons, help in creating a rational orientation and provide a perspective beyond the limitations of the traditional environment from which the problems of that environment may be viewed and judged. Education will also encourage the use of increased production of goods and services resulting in economic development for a wider cultural experience and for improved ways of living. Literacy has been recognised as an integral part of an individual's personality because illiteracy is seen to be a serious impediment to an individual's growth.

3. Liberation. — Liberation of man from dependency, helplessness and exploitation is essential for social justice and a country's socio-economic progress. It is hypothesized that illiterate and the poor can rise to their own liberation through action, literacy and dialogue. Earning a living independently and literacy will help in building up self-confidence and in standing on their own feet. Change agents cannot take care of the projects for ever. People must be organised in some sort of cooperatives to look after the running of the project themselves. True liberation will be when the rural poor develop self-confidence and earn their own livelihood through cooperative efforts.

The main objective of any development programme is to help the rural poor to organise themselves and their fellow sufferers to fight against the growing poverty they are living in and for an equitable and just social and political order. Earning their living through their own efforts will build self-confidence. It will also create a need for literacy. Literacy, self-confidence and education will help in liberating the rural poor from poverty and exploitation.

The article by El Tom, Mubarak, Wesley, Matthews and Lauro on the necessary skills of illiterate health workers and William Brieger's letter to the editor have been taken from the journal »World Health Forum«, Vol. V., 1984.

A.R. El Tom, N. Mubarak, S. Wesley, M.H. Matthews, and D. Lauro

Developing the skills of illiterate health workers

The Sudan Community-Based Family Health Project is being carried out in an area stretching north of Khartoum along both banks of the Nile for a distance of 80 km. The 92 000 inhabitants live in agricultural villages and are served by 37 local clinics and dispensaries staffed by one or more of the following categories of predominantly male personnel: medical assistants, male nurses, and community health workers.

This facility-based program provides relatively good access to a standard of health care as good as that available in most other parts of rural Sudan. However, preventive care is provided only by one health visitor, five community health workers, and a few sanitary overseers. In particular, basic maternal and child health services (such as immunization, contraception, oral rehydration therapy, and nutrition education) have not, for the most part, been provided by the existing system. Thus, the improvement of

maternal and child health care, with emphasis on the preventive aspects, has been the primary objective of the project.

The midwives trained as community agents in this program had already graduated from the government's nine-month midwifery training course. Literacy is not a prerequisite for government midwifery training, and the majority of midwives practising in the Sudan cannot read. Midwifery training, however, did not cover family planning or any other preventive health services beyond pregnancy monitoring, simple promotion of personal cleanliness, and seeing that the mothers and children had enough to eat.

Developing the course

The project staff developed the training curriculum (Table 1) with the aid of outside experts, who held workshops on nutrition, diarrheal diseases, family planning, and immunization.

Table I. Content of the training course

Infant diarrhea and oral rehydration
- Prevention of diarrhea.
- Treatment of infants and children with diarrhea, with specific attention to the instruction of village mothers in preparing and using oral rehydration solutions.
- Recognition of the symptoms of dehydration and understanding of the uses and limits of oral rehydration therapy.

Birth spacing
- Beneficial effects of birth spacing on maternal and child health.
- Methods of contraception, with emphasis on the pill: its use, contraindications, and possible side effects.

Nutrition

— Importanceof nutrition, food hygiene, and personal hygiene, especially for infants, children, and pregnant and lactating women.

Immunization

— Nature and importance of immunizations.
— Types of immunization: diphtheria-pertussis-tetanus, BCG, polio, measles, tetanus.

Techniques of home visiting and health education.

In preparation for the course, information was collected on health practices and beliefs in the area and on the characteristics, previous training, abilities, and working environment of those who were to be trained.

All 97 midwives in the target areas enrolled for training. Two complete three-week courses were given consecutively. In this way half the midwives could attend a course while the others remained in their communities to keep existing services going.

Of the two principal instructors, one specialized in family planning and in maternal and child health, the other in oral rehydration therapy and nutrition.

Religion played an important part in the training program. The target population is overwhelmingly Muslim and devoutly religious, so that any program believed to be contrary to the tenets of Islam would be unlikely to succeed. As the family planning component was known to be controversial, an effort was made to reassure the midwives that everything being asked of them was acceptable to and, in fact, favored by Islam. The program's opening and closing ceremonies began with recitations from the Koran. Whenever appropriate, connections were made between particular lessons and the teachings of Islam. Finally, the

Grand Mufti of the Sudan spoke to the midwives on the subject of Islam and family planning, allaying any fears they may have had.

Training methods

A variety of training methods was used, including participation, repetition, and creative reinforcement. Table 2 lists some of the methods employed.

Table 2. Training methods

Method	*Applications*
Slide and film shows	Recognition of symptoms of dehydration and malnutrition. Presentation of diseases preventable by immunization.
Demonstration	Marking bowls at the one-liter level for use in making oral rehydration solutions.
Practice	Marking bowls and mixing packets of oral rehydration solution. Keeping records of contraceptive pill disbursement.
Role-playing	Simulating contacts with village women in order to inform them about family planning, oral rehydration therapy, and nutrition.
Hospital and clinic visits	Observing and recognizing the symptoms of dehydration and malnutrition. Active participation in service delivery in a family planning clinic.
Guest lectures	Presentations of religious and medical views of family planning, and of the goals and strategy of the Ministry of Health's immunization program.
Seminar/ discussion	Causes and treatment of diarrhea in infants and children

Since the illiterate midwives could not take notes, a considerable amount of in-class repetition and reinforcement of the lessons was necessary to enable them to master the subject-matter. Literate midwives were encouraged to take notes and review lessons with the others. Typed notes were also distributed by project staff, and there were often revision sessions in the evenings. Care was taken to ensure that the illiterate trainees did not feel inferior to the literate ones.

Giving the midwives self-confidence for their new responsibilities was another important part of the training program. For this, a variety of approaches was used, such as role-playing, trainee presentations, and general encouragement. When beginning a new subject, the instructor would question the midwives about their own attitudes and practices. After encouraging them to keep up the good practices, she would discuss the other practices with them and explain why they were ineffective or harmful. For example, when some of the midwives expressed the belief that the milk of a pregnant woman is harmful for a child, the instructor asked them to tell her about specific cases in which a pregnant woman had continued to breast-feed. By showing that the practice had not harmed the children concerned, the instructor was able to correct a mistaken assumption, building on the trainees' own experience rather than simply telling them that they were wrong.

Of the various training activities, the trainees most enjoyed role-playing and visits to clinics. Role-playing was especially useful in reinforcing lessons on family planning. A trainee would take the part of a village woman, while another took that of a midwife. Depending on the objective of the session, the midwife would inform the »village woman« about family planning, screen her for contraindications to contraceptive pills, or check for side effects from pills. Afterwards, the other trainees would comment on what thay had seen and heard, offering suggestions and correcting mistakes. The instructor might also correct mistakes, but would usually emphasize the positive aspects of the

performance. The advantages of role-playing are that it is pleasant to do and to observe, it reinforces lessons in a creative way, and it gives the participants a foretaste of the kinds of situations they may ultimately meet.

As part of their training, the midwives attended sessions at a family planning clinic, an antenatal clinic, an antenatal ward, a delivery room, a postnatal ward, wards for children with diarrhea and malnutrition, and a maternal and child health center. At these sessions, the midwives were able to apply some of the health education techniques they would later be using in their own communities.

When appropriate (as at the family planning clinic and the ward for diarrhea patients), the midwives actually participated in the provision of care. They were given opportunities to mix an oral rehydration solution and administer it to dehydrated infants, to explain the use of contraceptive pills to prospective users, and to take case histories of children suffering from severe malnutrition so as to be able to advise their mothers.

One way of reinforcing a lesson was to have the subject-matter taught a second time, but in a new way. A health visitor and a nutrition educator proved especially helpful in this regard. Though not as well-trained as the project staff, they both had a wealth of experience of talking to midwives and village women. They could make a point in simple and direct language, and then reinforce it by means of anecdotes with a local flavor and examples from personal experience. A drawback was the slow pace at which these visitors covered a subject and their tendency to make occasional factual errors which had to be tactfully corrected by the instructors.

The instructors dealt with more than 50 major skills, the teaching being repeatedly reinforced in different ways (see Table 3). Each major skill had an average of about five or six components. The number of times a skill was reinforced varied depending on

the time available, the relative importance of the skill, its complexity, and the training methods that could be used to reinforce it. On the average, major skills were reinforced about 35 times, not only by instructors and guest lecturers but also by individual trainees. Thus a midwife demonstrating how to mark a bowl at the one-liter level for mixing oral rehydration solution would be providing a reinforcement of that skill for all those in attendance.

Table 3. Examples of skills taught during training

Family planning
- Teaching a woman how to use contraceptive pills.
- Telling a woman or a group of women about the benefits of family planning.
- Checking a woman for contraindications to pill use.

Nutrition
- Teaching a woman how to prepare different weaning foods for infants.
- Recognizing severe cases of malnutrition.
- Counselling the mother of a mildly or moderately malnourished child.

Care of diarrhea patients
- Teaching a woman how to mix and store oral rehydration solution.
- Recognizing possible sources of diarrhea.
- Leading a discussion with village women about diarrhea, dehydration, and oral rehydration solution.

Immunization
- Describing diseases that are preventable by vaccination.
- Explaining and promoting vaccination programs in a village.
- Recognizing common side effects of vaccinations.

The training program was an educational experience for the instructors and guest speakers as well as for the midwives. The instructors gave few lectures. Instead, they held discussions in which the midwives put forward their own ideas on how the project might best achieve its goals. The midwives became active participants in their own training in other ways as well. For example, they were asked to assist the project staff in developing a method for recording oral contraceptive use that could be understood by the illiterates among them. The end-product was an experimental system of duplicate cards, one to be kept by each user and one by the midwife. Specific users are identifiable by the color of the card, and pill use is recorded by means of a symbol and ciphers.

Regardless of the quality of the original training, it was essential to have some system for regular review of the course content. Otherwise there could be no guarantee that the field workers would maintain high levels of knowledge and skill, particularly those who were illiterate and could not easily refer to typed notes or publications.

Local clinic-based rural health workers were also given in-service training by the project staff to enable them to support the midwives in their work. Review activities began with a series of one-day refresher courses for small groups of midwives in their own or neighboring communities. Regular review sessions were held in which midwives working in neighboring communities met local health workers, initially once a week.

Evaluation

At the end of her training, each midwife was given an oral examination by the project director. In addition, a questionnaire was completed for each midwife immediately before and after her training in order to assess levels of knowledge and changes of attitude. Over one and a half years after the completion of the training, the questionnaire was completed again (see Table 4).

Table 4. Evaluation of the program

	Before training (%)	*After training (%)*	*Follow-up survey (%)*
Percentage of midwives believing that:			
breast-milk is the best food for babies	87	97	99
breast-feeding should begin by the end of the fourth month post partum	—	—	85
supplementary feeding should begin by the end of the fourth month post partum	70	98	100
when a child has diarrhea, he should be given less fluid	71	5	0
when a child has diarrhea, he should be given no fluid	1	0	0
when a child has diarrhea, he should be given less food	86	23	1
when a child has diarrhea, he should be given no food	13	0	0
when an infant has diarrhea, breast-feeding should be decreased			
when an infant has diarrhea, breast-feeding should be stopped	22	0	0
Percentage of midwives who knew:			
when to administer oral rehydration salts	9	99	99
how to prepare oral rehydration salts	3	100	98
three or more practices of contraception	41	87	99
eight or more contraindications to contraceptive pill use	—	—	89
a benefit of vaccination	61	100	98
that pregnant women should be instructed to eat more and have a varied diet	—	—	98

The findings from these surveys are very positive. Between the post-training evaluation and the follow-up survey, levels of knowledge and desired attitudes were well maintained or improved. During the third survey, no fewer than 85% of the midwives gave the desired response to any one indicator. Moreover, these data suggest that the review sessions in the field helped reduce problems that were still apparent at the end of the formal training course. For example, 23% of midwives surveyed at the end of the training still believed that children suffering from diarrhea should be given less food; this proportion was reduced to 1% a year and a half later.

The most dramatic change was in the percentage of midwives who knew how to prepare oral rehydration solutions: 3% before training, 100% just after training, and still 98% a year and a half later. Although data on the trainees' knowledge of contraindications to the use of contraceptive pills were not collected originally, the trend was probably similar. That 89% of the trainees could recall eight or more such contraindications over 18 months after training is an encouraging sign that illiterates can be safe providers of oral contraceptives. The project also achieved a dramatic improvement in the attitudes of the midwives concerning the provision of food and fluids to children with diarrhea.

Much of the training in nutrition aimed at inculcating a knowledge of nutritious combinations of locally available foods. This aspect of the training was not quantitatively evaluated, but resident health workers reported verbally that, during the local review sessions, more time was spent on nutrition than on any other subject.

To sum up, the data from the evaluation strongly suggest that illiterate community-based health workers can be successfuly trained for wider duties through a program based on a participatory approach invoiving the creative reinforcement of a relatively small set of skills.

William R. Brieger

Literacy not vital in primary care

SIR — Some degree of literacy is often one of the main criteria when recruiting village health workers. In some cases a specific level of formal education is required but often only an ability to read and write in the local language. It is less common to find that all candidates are welcome regardless of literacy level, as long as they have the support of their communities.

Behind the concern for literacy may be the assumption that a literate primary health worker can cope better with training than a nonliterate one and will therefore perform better on the job. But this assumption is perhaps made for the convenience of the trainer used to pedagogical methods or the programme manager nestled in piles of paper, and needs to be re-evaluated in the context of primary health care programmes that serve predominantly nonliterate societies.

The opportunity to assess the value of literacy came during a recent primary health worker training session in Idere, Nigeria. Several village leaders supported trainees who were not literate, as other interested volunteers could not be found. Considering that primary care should be made accessible to all and that a maximum number of villages should be represented, the course organizers decided to train all volunteers.

Since 1978, four training sessions for primary health workers have been held in Idere, the most recent from March to June 1983. This session, the largest so far held, was financed by a grant from the WHO, World Bank / UNDP Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases, and its object was to expand earlier pilot efforts into a comprehensive programme aimed at controlling locally endemic tropical diseases.

During preparatory visits to farming villages and extended family communities in the main town, members of the training team emphasized that the health worker would be a part-time volunteer who would incorporate community service into his or her daily activities. The volunteer concept was feasible because hamlets and communities were small (averaging 100 people or less) and desirable because a target of at least one volunteer per group would make primary care accessible to all.

Several recruitment criteria had evolved during previous training activities. These included a desire to help, community spirit, permanent residency in the area, and the ability to read and write in the local language (Yoruba). When it became obvious that the literacy requirement would bar some villages from sending participants, the team agreed to experiment and welcome all who truly desired to serve their communities.

The inclusion of nonliterate primary health workers forced the trainers to examine their programme closely. Some emphasis on traditional media had existed in previous sessions, and this aspect was expanded.

Storytelling, proverbs, riddles, poems, and songs now played a prominent part in each lesson. Planning to use such methods is one thing; delivering them is another. A local schoolteacher was recruited into the training team who was not only proficient in both Yoruba and English but had also studied his own culture closely enough to be able to speak allegorically and use proverbs that appealed to the trainees from the traditional farming communities.

Attention was also paid to visual methods. For each topic copies of simple pictures were distributed to each trainee. The pictures were referred to during the lesson and retained as a study aid. Yoruba language captions were added so that nonliterate trainees could ask others to help them study at home.

Since nonliterate people must depend on memory, points made during lessons were repeated frequently and each lesson began with a review of the previous one. Lessons were held once a week, and trainers visited villages between lessons to interview students and test their knowledge. During these visits it was found that trainees were receiving help from schoolchildren with their studies, and in areas where there was more than one trainee several would get together to form study groups.

An interview format was the logical choice for the immediate evaluation of knowledge gained. During individual interviews, lasting about 30 minutes, open-ended questions were asked and the answers were checked against standard answers on the test sheet. Trainees were encouraged to expand their answers as much as possible.

Award of a certificate was based on the test score and on attendance at the course. Attendance at a minimum of six lessons (half the course) was required unless a candidate was able to score at least 40% in the test. The average test score of 64.7% was well above the minimum demanded.

Of the 67 participants receiving certificates, 17 had no form of education. Those with education had taken »home lessons« or self-study (11) or had attended adult education classes (20), primary school (18) or secondary school (1). Average test scores showed a significant increase with educational level, as follows: no education, 58.7%; home lessons, 68.8%; adult education, 69.7%; and primary/secondary school, 71.6%. It should be noted that while the illiterate trainees had lower average scores, only two of them did not attain the minimum pass mark. The adequate scores of those educated by home lessons may reflect the role motivation plays in the learning process, as none of the home learners failed the test.

While illiteracy may restrict the heights to which a trainee health worker may aspire in terms of test scores, it does not ap-

pear to be a major barrier to acquiring a basic amount of knowledge and putting it to use. Literacy itself seems no guarantee of the level of knowledge retained, nor does education alone guarantee good performance in the field. Other factors such as residence in town and participation in previous training also had a positive effect on scores.

Once the course is over and the health workers have returned home, it is important that they should receive follow-up supervision and encouragement. Continuing education can take place in the field, and health workers can be invited to attend refresher courses.

Reinforcement by peers is another factor that can counteract illiteracy. For example, one illiterate health worker and three other trainees from the same village formed a study group to prepare for the test. Now, after the training, if the health worker forgets a particular item she can quite likely count on one of the other trainees to remember.

In conclusion, if proper attention is paid to training methods, supervision, and peer support, illiteracy should not be a handicap to the volunteer village health worker.

The following article was taken from the journal Reports, Vol. 13, No. 2, of the International Development Research Centre. As we intend to focus more intensively on the theme participatory training, participatory evaluation and research in one of the forthcoming editions, this article is to serve as an introduction to the theme. We would be pleased to receive practical case studies, seminar and workshop reports, hints on available literature and other discussion contributions. Please write to us at the following address: DVV, Rheinallee 1, D-5300 Bonn 2, FRG.

Nelly Stromquist

Action-research
An new sociological approach in developing countries

For some time there were great expectations that the social sciences might acquire the precision of the physical sciences. Social scientists embarked on models highly imitative of the natural sciences, with much attention placed on the random selection of subjects, identification of cause and effect relationships, use of special instruments to gather data, quantitative measurement of the presumed forces at work, and statistical tests for data analysis. Most of all, this imitation brought with it the notion of value-free science, with the precept that the researcher should not talk about what *should* be but merely what *is*.

Yet, despite the significant progress that has been made in the understanding of human behaviour in groups and communities, the identification of unvarying social »laws« has proven elusive. Social experiments have been marked by uncontrollable changes in the implementation of programs and treatments. Data gathered on social experiments — often obtained through questionnaires administered only one time — have tended to reflect static visions and abstractions imposed by the researcher rather than accurate descriptions of the social world. Moreover, the usefulness of social science research for policymaking has been limited because the findings tend to be equivocal.

In recent years a new consciousness has emerged, both among social scientists and within groups long used as subjects of social science research. Established experts in conventional sociological research now concede that quantitative methods can destroy institutions and processes. They admit much of our scientific knowledge really depends on social consensus rather than on absolute truths.

In response to the crisis faced by conventional models, various alternatives have emerged, among them participatory and action-research.

Action-research is not the solution to all the weaknesses in the social sciences, but it is built on certain assumptions and presents certain attributes that render it a useful and appealing approach. This is particularly so in developing countries, where there is an urgency for prompt action as well as for action based on reflection.

First of all, action-research seeks social transformation. This emphasis leads action-research to examine problems that affect disadvantaged social groups and makes the researchers become advocates of their interests. The sympathetic understanding by the researchers working with marginal and oppressed groups has been criticized by conventional sociologists as

demonstrating a lack of objectivity, and therefore contrary to the norms of science. But, as sociologist Peter Berger remarks, value-free social science does not mean that the researchers are free of values or unaware of values that exist in a given situation, but rather that they can perceive reality apart from their own hopes and fears.

Because in action-research the researchers develop a close relationship with the community they serve, a different assumption of knowledge is at work. One must let go of the idea that knowledge is the exclusive domain of the expert and that it can be gathered only through the use of instruments designed and calibrated by the researchers themselves. One must assume that people, regardless of their educational levels and occupation, possess important practical and empirical knowledge that allows them to operate in their current environments.

The task of the researchers then becomes not to produce knowledge but to facilitate the construction of knowledge by the community itself.

A second assumption action-research makes toward knowledge is that effective knowledge is not always that which is transmitted from the outside but also that which is gradually produced through the interplay of action and reflection. Hence it is through the community's involvement in the identification of its main problems, in the collective understanding of the dynamics of these problems, and in their eventual solution that both knowledge and action will emerge.

Linked to the notion of knowledge is the issue of «empowerment» — the creation of a feeling among the disadvantaged that they have a say in what is studied, how it is studied, and how it is interpreted. Empowerment has a particularly important purpose in transitional societies where weak social institutions predominate and where in many cases norms regarding participation in decision-making have still to be established.

While action-research has brought a different posture to knowledge and the role of the researchers, it has not produced major innovations in research design and methods. On the contrary, action-research has moved away from the complex and sophisticated research designs of mainstream sociology. For gathering data, moreover, it has not so much introduced new instruments as it has called for multiple sources for the data and placed heavy emphasis on the procurement of information through informal and interactive processes such as group discussions, dramatizations, and role playing. The fact that action-research tends to use previously known qualitative data-gathering procedures, as well as simpler approaches to problem definition and analysis, has been noted by certain critics who then say that there is nothing new in action-research except lax scientific standards. But action-research is not a one-tool innovation; it is a new philosophy of social science research with a more modest attitude toward knowledge and a reduced sense of superiority toward the groups under study.

The process of action-research does go through conventional sociology's logical sequence of problem definition, data gathering, and data interpretation. However, the process tends to be less linear and is marked by continuous interaction between researcher and researched. Actual experience with action-research indicates that it can take various forms. The involvement of community people varies from project to project and does not always occur at all key stages of the research process. Also it appears that the action component of action-research is not always immediate. In some cases, lags may exist.

Although numerous experiences in action-research remain yet to be documented and evaluated, preliminary assessments of this approach show that it holds great potential for work with heretofore powerless groups such as peasants and women. India and various Latin American countries have seen many instances of action-research; most of the findings come from these countries.

Through its frequent use of group discussions, action-*research* enables marginal groups to become active social forces, to express their viewpoints, to evoke their experience, and to analyze their living conditions. In the case of women, long subjected to isolation within the domestic sphere, action-research offers a useful bridge between the home and the public sphere.

The use of less-traditional methods of data-gathering techniques such as group discussions, dramatization, testimonials, and popular theater allows groups not familiar with the written word and uncomfortable with outsiders to be more effective in producing and interpreting data.

The participation of individuals in problem identification and subsequently in problem solving does bring forward the points of view of these individuals and significantly facilitates program implementation.

Action-research has a long and difficult road before substantive and methodological issues are resolved.

Nonetheless, action-research represents a very useful attempt to reduce some of the polarities brought about by modernization, such as developed and underdeveloped, expert and layperson, and vanguard and led. Someone has remarked that tradition and modernity relate to each other through a variety of compromises and mutual adjustment — a process that has been called »cognitive bargaining«. If action-research can help in this process, it can only be beneficial to social transformation.

For India and Nepal: Readings in Hindi

FAO's Freedom from Hunger Campaign / Action for Development has recently published three books in Hindi for grass-root level workers, women activists, adult educators, trainers and all those interested in issues related to poverty, development, women and participatory training.

1. **Vikaas ke Ayaam: Kuchh Samasyaayen Kuchh Samaadhan** (Dimensions of Development: Some problems some solutions). This 195 page book, edited by Abha Bhaiya and Kamla Bhasin, has three sections — the first one contains articles describing and analysing the different aspects and dimensions of rural poverty in South Asia. The second section contains case studies of successful attempts at rural development and section three has articles on trainings and workshops for activists.

2. **Mahila Vikaas ke Ayaam: Kuchh Samasyaayen Kuchh Samaadhaaan** (Dimensions of Women's Development: Some problems some solutions): This over 100 page volume also edited by Abha Bhaiya and Kamla Bhasin contains articles on the situation of rural women in South Asia and case studies of attempts by rural women to improve their social, economic and political situation. Both these volumes have a lot of illustrations, poems and quotations also to make reading lighter and inspiring.

3. **Vikaas karmiyon Ki Bhoomika wa Prashikshan** (Role and training of development activists) is the Hindi translation of a book written in English by Vasant Palshikar, Laxmi Rao and Kamla Bhasin.

   All three books are available free of cost from
   FFHC/AD Programme Officer, FAO, 55 Max Mueller Marg, New Delhi 110003, India.

p. 10 UNESCO. It's never too late to learn, ill. 37
p. 30 Resources, Helped the Ageed, p.9
p. 36 UNESCO. It's never too late to learn, ill. 80
p. 44 Resources, Helped the Aged, p. 13
p. 52 UNESCO. World Assembly on Ageing, ill. 81
p. 56 UNESCO. It's never too late to learn, ill. 34
p. 72 ibid, ill. 156
p. 78 ibid, ill. 112
p. 82 ibid, ill. 58
p. 106 Christa B. Panick, Indien, Portrait einer Reise, p. 125
p. 114 UNESCO. It's never too late to learn, ill. 57
p. 138 ibid, ill. 144

CONTENTS

To our readers 1

Young Oxfam
A ripe old age 3

Gerardo Mondragon
Special programme for retirees. A model project in Cali, Colombia 11

Ngang O'Khan Kabwasa
The eternal return 19

Ashis Bose
Aspects of Ageing in India 23

Lim Hoy Pick
Programmes for the aged in Singapore 37

Synghan Kim
Lifelong learning. Educational opportunities for the elderly in South Korea .. 45

Mirok Li
Burial cult in Korea 53
Death, an indefinable theme 57

Monika Völker
Three approaches to adult education for retired people 63

Harbans Bhola
Without literacy, development limps on one leg 67

Bernd Pflug
Now I have learned the sudanese word 'musharaka' 73
Are you literate? A collage 78

Kamla Bhasin
Why and how literacy for women 83

Lalita Ramdas
Illiteracy, women and development 95

Hans Raj Gugnani
Adult literacy by 1990 107

Ranjit Singh
Adult education and rural development 115

A.R. El Tom et al.
Developing the skills of illiterate health workers 119

W. Brieger et al.
Letter to World Health Forum/Literacy not vital in primary care 129

Nelly Stromquist
Action research. A new sociologial approach in developing countries 133